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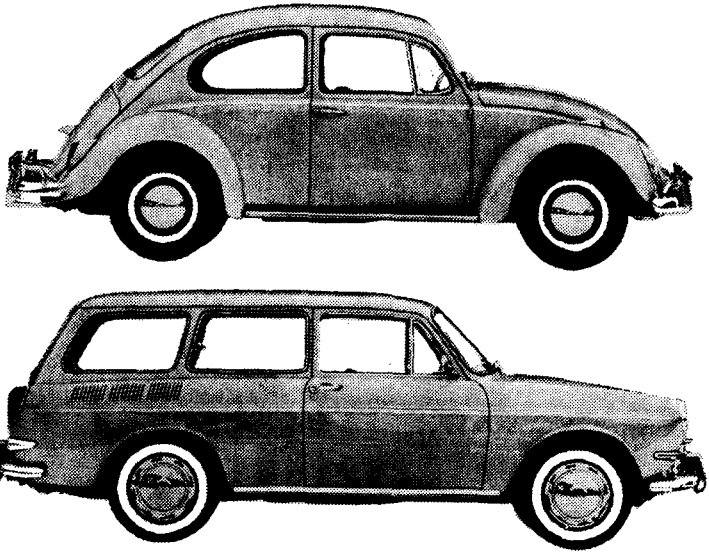

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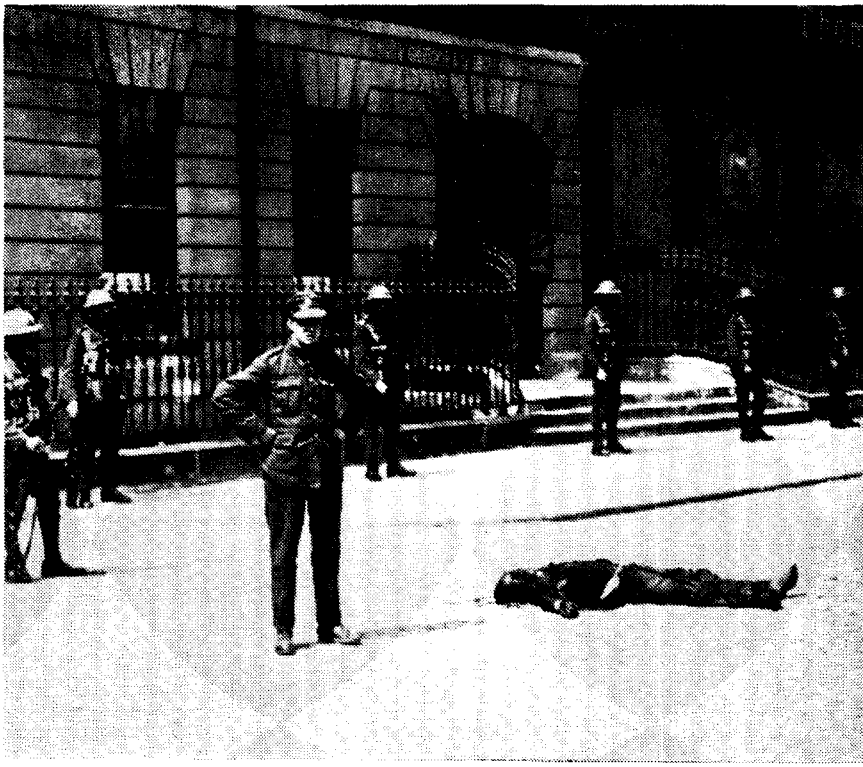

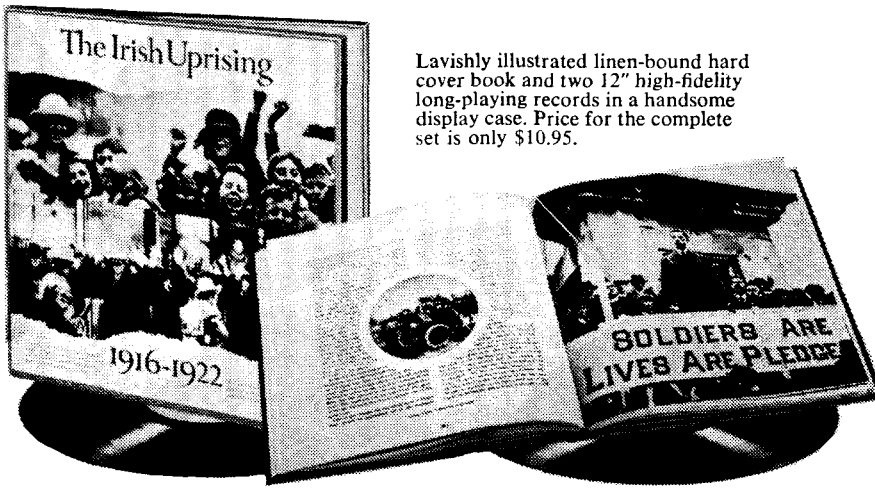

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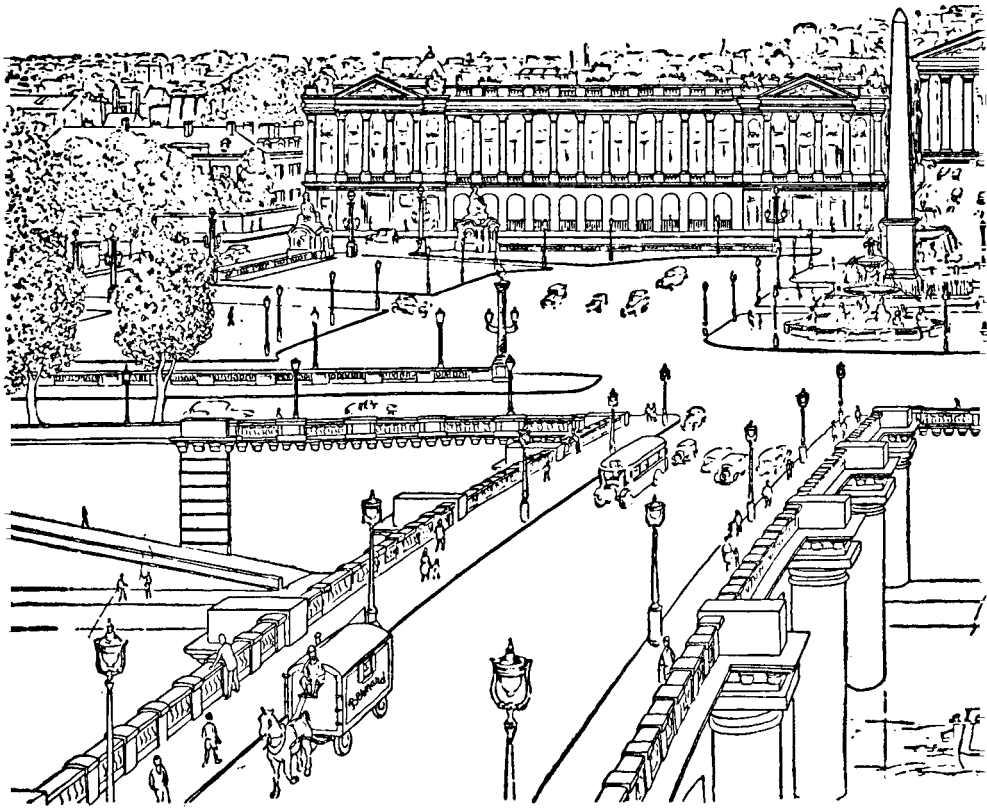

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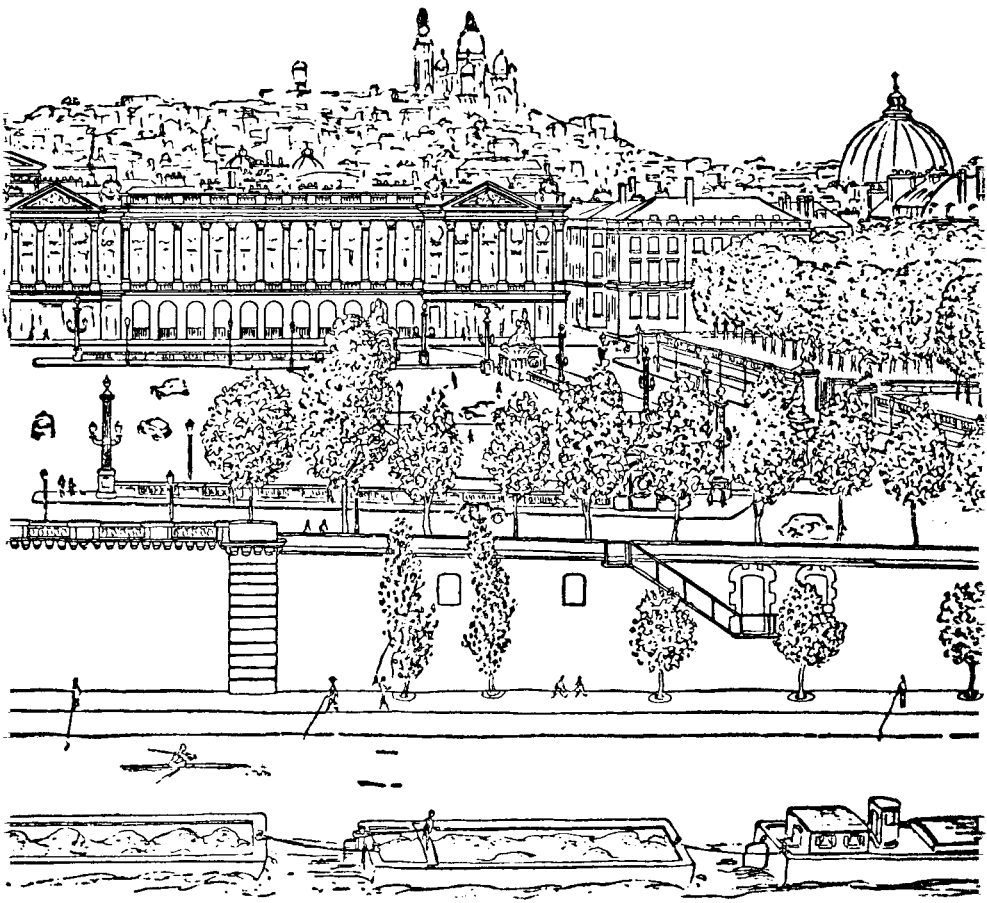

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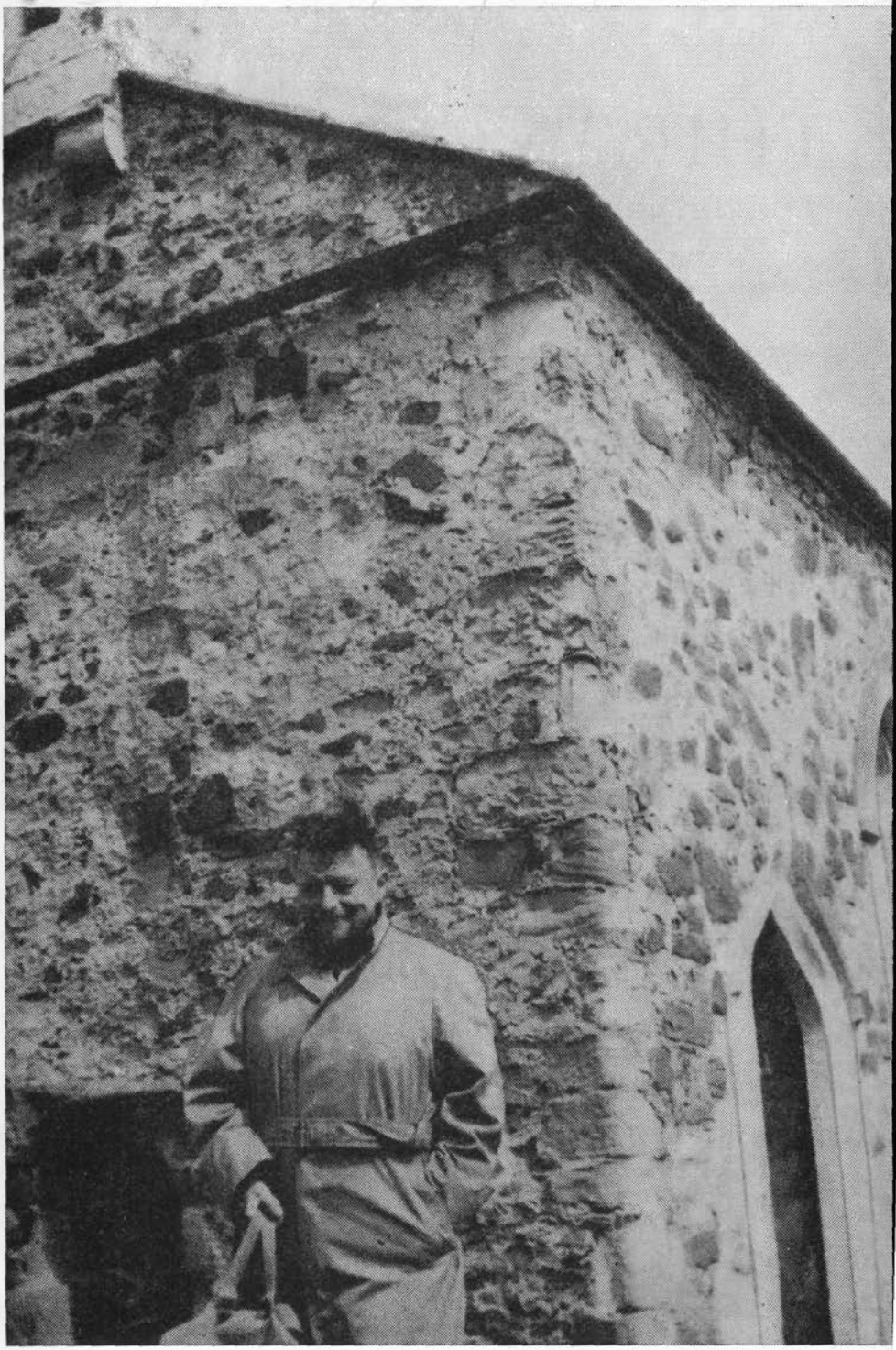

Lowry on a walking tour of the Lake District in June 1957, a few weeks before his death.

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Swinging The Paradise Street Blues:

Malcolm Lowry in England

Conrad Knickerbocker

Besides being one of the great talents of this century, Malcolm Lowry was also a ferocious drunk, fallen and exiled heir to the back parlor of the Establishment, seastruck fumble-thumbed sailor, composer of hack foxtrots and banger of jazz ukeleles, remittance man, syphilophobe, masturbator, poet, myth-maker and Faust. Despite the success of Under the Volcano, *few knew him or cared when*

Editor's Note:

On Saturday, April 2, 1966, Conrad Knickerbocker died of a self-inflicted wound from a .22 rifle in his garage in Westfield, New Jersey. He was thirty-seven, and had come East from Kansas City shortly after Christmas with his family (married twice, he had three children) to work as a front-rank book critic for *The New York Times*. But Kansas City was the place he called home, and New York wasn't easy for him. Born in Berlin, the son of the famous correspondent H. R. Knickerbocker, his early years were spent in traveling; Kansas City was the first place he had really settled. He worked for the *Kansas City Star* and Hallmark Greeting Cards, and published book criticisms in many papers, in addition to his own work in *Life*, *Esquire* and *The New York Times*. He was particularly noted for his articles describing the movement in American literature he called "Black Humor."

Conrad Knickerbocker was a friend and advisor to the editors of this magazine, and contributed an outstanding interview with William Burroughs in # 35.This issue, with his article on Malcolm Lowry—a writer whose disordered and foot-loose life had great fascination for him—is dedicated to his memory. The article is prefaced by a prospectus which Lowry submitted in 1964 after having visited England.

—G.A.P.

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he died in 1957, because after Mexico and his discovery of the Consul in himself, he bowed out and at last became only a writer.

I spent last May in England, seeking the young Lowry as he was before the Fall. He came to manhood in the late 1920's and early 1930's, when Sebastian Flyte's teddy-bear was no epicene gesture but a profound symbol, and Aleister Crowley, the Great Beast 666, was a more appealing personage to undergraduates than any lecturer. Lowry traveled the conventional routes—public school at The Leys, where James Hilton had found his Mr. Chips in one of those unbelievable housemasters, and St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, where Lowry's supervisor was the second most boring don in England. But even then he was beginning to move toward his own horizon. Still a schoolboy, he shipped as a deckhand to the Orient, moved in on Conrad Aiken as spiritual son, and wrote a novel.

He came down from Cambridge to literary London. His father, the incarnation of the worst of the imperial middle class, forced him to live in temperance hotels, but he attended clever luncheons in Charlotte Street and hung on Liam O'Flaherty's shoulder in the pubs of Fitzrovia.

My article would not be a straight biographical segment, but rather a report of the process of my discovery of the young Lowry, a gradual intensifying of the lights until he emerges from the shadows. Lowry would remain center stage, but the other participants, as I encountered them, would be the people who remembered him. How they remembered him reveals what England has come to. He disappeared before Munich; he did not grow old with them; hence their memories are clearer, sadder, and happier. The young Lowry represented a kind of brilliant youthfulness and gaiety that England seems incapable of today. Now Rotting Hill extends beyond all city limits, and Lowry's memory magnifies this knowledge.

The period covered would be 1927 to 1933, Lowry from eighteen to twenty-five. Hopefully, the structure and tempo would be somewhat those of an epiphanous short story. The piece would be all fact, but mood and tenor is what I'd be after—past contrasting to present.

—CONRAD KNICKERBOCKER

December 11, 1964

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On the night of June 26, 1957, Malcolm Lowry pitched forward and died, and his body lay on the floor all night amid a gin bottle's broken splinters. His big novel, *Under the Volcano*, had been published ten years before, and somebody called him a genius then, but after the inquest—"death by misadventure"—only eight people attended his country-church funeral. *The Brighton Argus* ran a few paragraphs under the headline, "She Broke Gin Bottle." *The Times* did not cover it.

So *la mordida*, the bite of corruption about which he was always talking, found him, not in a *cantina* nor aboard ship nor facing the Pacific, but in an eighteenth-century cottage in a Sussex village. He had come home at last to England. After his death they started calling him genius again. They called his novel "vivid and relentless and murderous and beautiful." They started mentioning him in the same breath with Joyce and Faulkner, until somebody had to say *Under the Volcano* was the finest novel in English since the war, and finally, that it was one of the few great novels of the century. The legend began, the legendary tone, as though he had actually been grim, this man who once loved the Memphis Five above all, as though he had found a new map of hell. They talked about "demons" and "vision" as though he had marched off to a crucifixion. They remembered. "My God, I never saw a man who could get so drunk. He would sit for hours listed forty-five degrees to starboard, and then, when you thought he was completely gone, he would say, 'Now hast thou but one bare hour to live, and then thou must be damned perpetually.'"

I was seven years too late. Everyone was too late for Malcolm Lowry. The name of my 707 was the Kinchinjunga. As on all trans-Atlantic flights, a drunken young German stood all night at the bar, and finally the stewardesses put on Macy's sweaters over their saris. We rushed into the dawn at two-thirty in the morning. When the Kinchinjunga began to descend, England in a rare bright sun looked so green and orderly that one might expect to die there only by appointment in a fine bed surrounded by heirs.

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The new England: chalk on a wall, "Vote labour and have a nigger for a neighbour." The old: jugged hare at Rule's; in a corner houndstooth jacket haw-hawing with huge feather hat over lashings of brandy. Lowry might once have recognized a similar scene, before the fall, before the booze and Mexico, but instead he went to a shack on the water near Vancouver, where he swam every day and talked only to fishermen so that he might live without drinking and go on revising draft after draft of *Volcano*. In the book, Geoffrey Firmin, a drunken British Consul stranded in a Mexican town like Cuernavaca, staggers to his death like a dog, fallen magician in the final exile. His half-brother Hugh, chronic observer and on-the-roader but still whole, can't circumvent the Consul's doom. Lowry was both men, consumed by his characters. He always said he felt as though he were being written. I had come to England to find out what he had been like before the Consul took charge.

He was born in the family home at Caldy, Cheshire, on July 28, 1909, with three upstanding older brothers and an iron tyrant of a father who made a fortune as a Liverpool cotton broker. Arthur O. Lowry, who signed himself, "your affectionate Dad," was not big rich, but rich enough to afford Inglewood, a fifteen-room Tudor oaken-beamed house with the usual large and valuable grounds, and to give his sons those advantages that in England either make or break you.

Liverpool rambles along the banks of the Mersey River and has place names like Knotty Ash and the Cast Iron Shore. They think of that lot down South as the English, and Lowry once said he would rather have yaws than go through all that again. I telephoned Stuart Lowry, a loyal-to-Dad retired cotton broker, the only brother Malcolm had spoken to and vice-versa.

"You sound like a gentleman," Stuart Lowry said. "If you're writing a biography, just say that he was very much wanted and loved, really. He tended to overdramatize his parents. He'd go around with his hand clenched, pretending he was a pirate with a hook. Mother loved him. Let sleeping

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dogs lie. I respect you Americans; after all, I lived in Dallas five years. Lots of oil and cotton down there. You sound tired after your trip. Have a highball." Click. I had two highballs, remembering that Lowry had laughed, even though he was unlimbering in a mental hospital near London, because his father had died of cirrhosis of the liver, and Dad, expert Methodist swimmer, had never taken a drink in his life. Stuart Lowry also forgot to mention the raree show of social disease on Paradise Street, full of bottled deformities, where young Malcolm had the sexual bejeesus scared out of him semi-permanently, so that most of the time in those early days he felt sure the spirochetes were boring away at his vital parts and it was a choice of whiskey or paresis.

"Those Wirral people are a hard lot," a lady told me on the train to Cambridge. His parents had shipped him off at the age of seven, standard toughening-up procedure, but he couldn't have been too sorry. A few months before his death, he told a friend that the nursemaid in charge at Inglewood used to take him to a secluded corner of the garden and beat him and twist his arm. He wondered if *that* had anything to do with all the trouble later.

He first went to Caldicote, a preparatory school of about one hundred students, at Hitchin, a small town twenty-five miles southwest of Cambridge. No one remembers how he got the nickname of Lobs. A classmate recalls that at the age of ten, Lobs was somewhat "fat and clumsy, with a very uncertain temper. He appeared to be quite unmoved by an elder brother's achievement in playing rugger for England and was not particularly interested in or good at athletic pursuits. Nor was he a very enthusiastic scout." Just an average defiant, tormented English boy.

I got off the train, and for a bit sat with the German scientists on the lawn in back of the Garden House, watching the undergraduates punting on the Cam. Some shaggy, others muscular, none exquisite, they poled through the dark water, and the ones with a good sense of timing were the best, had the prettiest girls lolling in the punt. I walked along the Backs to The Leys School, where from 1923 to 1927 Lowry had tried

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to live up to Dad's expectations. In the distance, across a playing field of that unbelievable clipped grass, an occasional muted cry, like a bird's, came from the figures in white who were playing cricket.

Maurice F. Howard, the careers master of the school, showed me a dining hall which once was the study hall in which Lowry's gaze had wandered, and pointed out the window of his dormitory in West House. I paused before a plaque honoring William Henry Balgarnie, "The Balf," who for James Hilton, another Leysian, had become Mr. Chips. Actually, The Balf had never found a Greer Garson, but he was beloved anyway. He encouraged Clarence Malcolm Lowry to write under the pseudonym of Camel in *The Leys Fortnightly*, stories, poems and wry, sardonic coverage of hockey and rugby matches. I looked at old photographs of Lowry in school plays as Percy in *Tilly of Bloomsbury* and General Fairfax in *Oliver Cromwell*, and read little notices that Lowry had spoken before the Literary and Debating Society on the subject, "That this Society deplores the literary tastes of the modern schoolboy." Howard was a vigorous, discreet classics master, and he had little to say about *Under the Volcano*. As we sat on a bench outside the tuck shop drinking orange squashes and watching the vigorous, discreet schoolboys, I realized that this healthy school, founded in 1875 by the Rev. H. Bisseker, M.A., simply had no instruments to record the passing through of someone like Lowry. When the mathematicians and soldiers and civil servants and clergymen and solicitors gathered at meetings of the Old Leysian Union, no plaques bearing his name would be unveiled nor toasts drunk to his memory. I went back and joined the Germans drinking gin-and-tonics on the Garden House lawn. After dinner, while I was strolling on Trumpington Street, someone handed me a handbill, "Witchcraft Prevalent at Oxford."

The next day I climbed two flights to see T. R. Henn in his study at St. Catherine's College, where Lowry had taken third class honors in 1932, the kind of tripos that goes to the dumb rich or to brilliant wasters. Henn was a Yeats scholar, rosy, mustached, with a military limp, the kind of don who

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has kept Cambridge going since the year one, the kind Central Casting sends over when one asks for a Cambridge don. Roll-top desk, floor to ceiling books, books in a lazy-Susan bookcase, tripos examination papers all over, and pale scholastic light illuminating the sherry, whiskey and gin bottles by the window. In 1929, Henn had been director of studies in English for St. Catherine's and Trinity and was Lowry's supervisor for two years. Supervisor: the Man, inquisitor, crammer, psychoanalyst of sorts, who meets with his undergraduates once a week ostensibly to hear an essay, but actually to wrestle with all the infinities, to assign, chivvy, bully and inspire.

First off, a fast sherry, and the fact that Henn had been a brigadier in the war, had served in Italy with a brave little fellow from Harvard. *Very* good show, the war. Lowry was apt to turn up late or not at all for supervisions. "He was a tough person, slow-spoken, rather idle. I was not impressed by the quality of his writing. Cambridge favors fast starters; he was a slow starter. He collected a number of gate bills—small fines for returning to college late, after the gates were closed at night. I *was* impressed by the eccentricity of his vacation plans. He was always shipping off somewhere."

Just once in supervisions, Lowry had done it Henn's way, had given his all for Cantab. and St. Cat's. Discussing the medieval ballad, he cited a seaman's ditty, itself a variation on a music hall song, that had turned up in a fo'c'sle. This illustrated the subterranean life of ballads and proved to Henn's satisfaction that Lowry was paying attention.

"He made quite a good point there. But he didn't take much part in college life. He wasn't an oarsman. And you know, after graduation, *he never came back.*" Never came back to chuckle with the physicists over what a good show the war had been. Nor, I supposed, had he made bright talk at Henn's Monday night at-homes over coffee, fruit and snuff. Henn used to read poetry aloud with I. A. Richards. Nice. Henn was official, the voice and guardian of the institution, and the institution does not cherish those who do not cherish it. Cambridge: bikes, beer, gowns knotted over the shoulder,

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one billion paperbacks, the feet of reverent German tourists shuffling through King's Chapel, little plastic statues of the Beatles in the shop windows on Market Street; and all that legend—Isherwood dropping his copy of Bishop Stubbs into the Cam—and wit, "Unspeakably lovely, and no one speaks to you," and charm. Marvelous. A dream to which Lowry of course could never return, having never dreamt it in the proper way.

If institutions couldn't remember him except as a footnote, try the people. London *hoicks!* Soho, Bloomsbury, tea, chops, Teazy-Weazy, talk, monocles, small dogs. At last, looking down Park Lane, I saw approaching through the twilight the true Waughian vision—a white drophead Rolls driven by an Arabian prince wearing sunglasses, the golden cords binding his robes, undergraduates lounging beside him in the leather —but in the same glance I saw Trader Vic's and Wimpy's. The Rolls disappeared behind a dented 1953 Cadillac. "A corpse shall be transported by express," the pentameter of *Volcano*.

I met Ronald Hill in the lobby of the Piccadilly Hotel and he carefully ordered a cup of coffee while I hurled down a large gin and asked for another. Ronnie Hill: popular singer for the BBC before the war; wrote for radio; scored revues. "One day when I was fifteen, I was playing the piano in the music room at The Leys and Malcolm came in. He stood listening and then brought his ukelele, although he insisted on calling it a taropatch. We started to play jazz, 'hot music' it was called. He was seventeen, a sub-prefect; so he had made some sort of accommodation with authority. I revered him. He was a sort of trend-setter in a mildly daring way. He and Michael Rennie—unlikely pair—introduced trousers with turn-ups and also pointed sideburns.

"One of our favorite tunes was 'Hindu Babe,' full of rhythmic breaks, and Lobs always passed wind during the breaks. Remarkable. He was allowed to perform at the year-end concert, an honor, but without the gas. We started writing tunes together and paid a few pounds to have our songs printed. I believe one was actually performed once on the

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A song which Lowry and Hill paid to have published in 1927.

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BBC. Then he went to sea in May, 1927, as a deckhand bound for China. One day in October, a friend rushed up and said, 'Lowry is back and he's in your bathroom.' I found Malc roaring drunk, wearing a seaman's windbreaker, shouting songs at the top of his voice and playing his uke. I was terrified. He'd moved into a man's world and I was still a schoolboy.

"He had wanted to go to Christ's, and as a result, I did too, but after the bathroom episode, I was greatly relieved when he went to St. Cat's instead. He visited me once in Cambridge when I was living in digs in New Square. I was by then frightened of him. He seemed full of suppressed violence, and I didn't want to be possessed. So I was unfriendly, and he was hurt. I didn't see him again.

"Possessed, my God!" Hill began to laugh softly to himself, sipping his coffee. He was trim and taut, but with two gins in me and wanting another, I began to imagine that something terrific, quite enormous had happened to him along the way. Something huge had happened to all England. These were aftermath people, recuperating, having to be damned careful. Waiting in queue for a telephone at Fortnum & Mason's, a lady had asked me why I had come here. She couldn't imagine. She really wanted to know. I said good-bye to Hill and a few moments later caught a glimpse of him in the crush on Piccadilly, walking erect and thoughtful, more than alone, a man careful to be in full control. Possession. Vision. Demons. London had rarely figured in Lowry's work. In Mexico, Hugh Firmin had remembered Bolowski's "shabby little shop" on New Compton Street, imagining the thousand sheets of his songs rotting in the shop window. No comedian would ever sing the tunes of "the schoolboy composer" at the Birkenhead Hippodrome.

I ate chicken *Jeannette* and drank a bottle of wine at a restaurant presided over by a Levantine with a spurious French accent, and then went in search of John Davenport, book and drama critic, man of letters, large capacity, large memory, one of Lowry's best friends at Cambridge. He moved through all the pale shades of London, and finding him was a matter

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of phone calls, notes left here and there, tips, clues. A matter of enough gins to connect with the world of mystical correspondences, black and white magics, terrible cabalistic coincidences, signs, portents, all the manifestations of an incomprehensible deity by which Lowry had guided his life. Crossing the Lowry barrier. Late that afternoon, at last available to the Demiurge, Cambridge remembered, Liverpool forgotten, I closed in on Davenport across all of London, finding him at the end of a corridor, slumped in his overcoat in a chair of the waiting room of a somber, tattered place in Whitehall Court called the Authors' Club. He was staring out the window at a sooty wall.

"You must remember that Malcolm was a masturbator," were virtually his first words to me. We immediately had gone to the club bar and were hunched over in some sort of Elizabethan pew. He kept on his overcoat. "Middle, *middle* class origins. He hated The Leys, all that Wesleyan heartiness. I first met him in Robin Fedden's rooms at Magdalene during the October term of 1929. 'Are you Mr. Fedden?' he said. 'No,' I replied. 'John Davenport.' 'Oh yes, the poet.' And we had drinks, many drinks.

"I had only three fights with him—horseplay, really. When drunk he would reach a psychotic stage of infantile self-absorption, and his monologues would become longer and more convoluted until finally he would fall under what I called a 'Malcolmspell,' and fisticuffs were the only cure.

"He was muscular and had huge hockey player's thighs, so that he wasn't able to walk any distance without chaffing himself. He would lock himself in his rooms for days with whiskey and sardines and read the novels of B. Traven until I could get him out for a short stroll. He was always making embarrassing gestures, insisting that we become blood brothers with appropriate ceremonials, things like that.

"Don't let *Volcano* deceive you, or the way things turned out; he had friends; they loved him. The whole Conrad Aiken thing, for instance. You remember the first letter Malcolm wrote to Aiken. It began, 'I have lived only nineteen years and all of them more or less badly.' And Malc's voyage

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to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and their beano on bootleg gin the first night, and Malc tossing Conrad into the fireplace, thereupon fracturing the great poet's skull. Conrad came to England in 1930, and Malcolm's father simply gave up and put him in charge, paid him six pounds a week to act *in loco parentis*. Conrad and Malcolm were natural father and son, obsessively so.

"Malcolm tried to keep Conrad and me apart; I think he feared conspiracy. Once, when I was set to go down to Conrad's home, Jeakes House, in the village of Rye, Malcolm sent a telegram saying, 'Conrad tired, twisted, tortured. Avoid these darks and danks.' When I met Conrad in 1934 and mentioned this, he said Malcolm had told him I'd disappeared abroad.

"And Wynyard Browne, later a successful playwright; Kathleen Raine, Hugh Sykes-Davies, and then William Empson and all those people in Charlotte Haldane's circus. And James Travers, a vague, amiable boozer, rather rich and languid, worshipped Malcolm; he later died in a burning tank in North Africa. Travers once drove his car through the front door of the Ship Inn at Rye while Malcolm and Conrad were boozing inside. Tom Neeves, the proprietor, rushed from behind the bar biting his little finger and shrieking, 'Oh, we can't have that! We *can't*!'

"Nor was it all beer at the Bath or the Eagle or the Maypole. Malcolm published several stories in *Experiment*, and he had completed a draft of his first novel, *Ultramarine*, by January, 1930. It was a perfectly straightforward account of his trip to China. (He was a terrible sailor, incidentally. He started off as a coal trimmer, lowest of the low. He had no ambition to be an A. B. seaman. He was interested only in the amniotic mythos of the sea.) But after he finished the first draft, he started all that collage, the fault, too, of his big book. Ah, well, all of it was very long ago. I must go to the theater."

Davenport's eyes had turned cloudy in the haze of the bar; it was the kind of place in which one expected pigeons to fly around. I paid for the drinks and stopped at the Grosvenor House to pick up some laundry. When I arrived at the Cado-

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gan Hotel, the hall porter said a gentleman was waiting to see me in the bar. It was Davenport, sitting erect and massive in his overcoat, sipping a large whiskey.

"I forgot to tell you," he said in his soft, rich voice, resonant beyond breeding, beyond Cambridge, beyond literature, the once eternal sound of civilization, but also faintly menacing. "I forgot to tell you, Conrad and I finally decided what it was about Malcolm. It was simply that he hadn't wanted to be born at all. 'Never to have lived is best, ancient writers say... The second best's a gay goodnight and quickly turn away.' "

He vanished into the night in his overcoat to review a troop of African dancers, and I roared to the East End and paid the urchins not to steal the expensive Jaguar hubcaps and elbowed through one thousand Americans escaping the tourists at the Prospect of Whitby. After a steak and chips, I drank whiskey on the little porch overhanging the Thames. The warehouse cranes stood black against a thin moon. "I too have heard the sea sound in strange waters—*sh-sh-sh* like the hush in a conch shell," the nineteen-year-old endurer of a bad life had written in one of his first letters to Aiken. " 'And silently there above us,' " he had quoted, " 'beyond our dreams and knowledge, Presences swept, and over us streamed their shadows.' "

A terrible clangor begins to rise from certain parts of London after midnight. I went to the Jack of Clubs in Brewer Street. An American Negro sang Sinatra-a-go-go and soft-shoed, and a middle-aged English couple at the next table rolled in their chairs, giggling hopelessly. A nearly empty bottle of bourbon sat on their table. The lady took off her hat and spun it across the room. I wondered what would happen if I became drunk and fell down in the street, as the Consul had on the Calle Nicaragua. As with him, would a kindly Englishman come along in an MG Magna, illegitimately wearing a Trinity tie, to offer a nip of Burke's Irish? My fellow survivors chattered with guilty joy. The air was filled with snickers and shouts, and a kind of hurt nostalgia that no one could bear to talk about. *La mordida*: spiritual violence.

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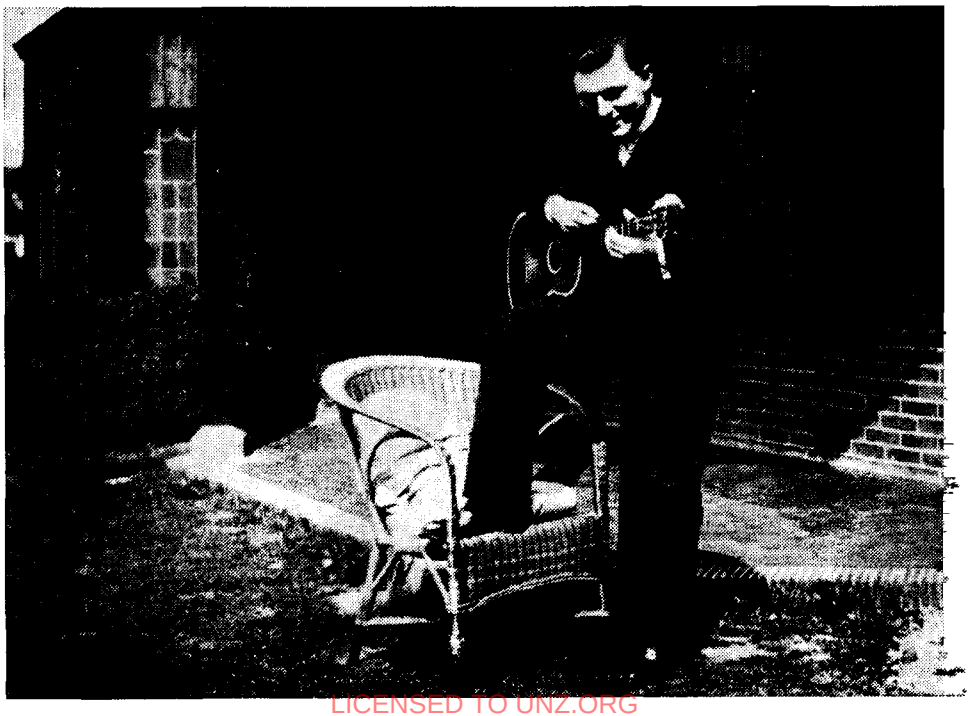
Dissolve slowly through bank holiday with all of London lying on the grass. In Trafalgar Square, a beautiful young mod in velvet pants ignored a band of evangelists shouting into a loudspeaker. A shuffling man waved a placard, "The Wicked Shall Be Turned Into Hell." I met Martin and Ralph Case, brothers, closest non-literary friends of Lowry's, at the Duke of York in Upper Rathbone Place. Major Alf Klein was behind the bar. "That," said Martin Case, pointing to a Great Dane lying under a table, "is a direct descendant of the original Hound of the Baskervilles. I mean actually. His great-grandfather, or something, appeared in the movie." Young men with nature-boy hair lay full length on the sidewalk in front of the pub, cradling their heads on their guitars. Lowry had drunk here, hanging on Liam O'Flaherty's shoulder, during his first year down from Cambridge, living in marvelous seedy digs in Devonshire Street, being a young novelist, roistering with the king swingers. Martin Case had taken a double first in physical sciences at Cambridge in 1927 and was doing research work in biochemistry under J. B. S.

Lowry on one of his rare visits to the family home, Caldy, Cheshire, 1932.



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Haldane when John Davenport brought Lowry around to Charlotte Haldane's salon at Roebuck House on the banks of the Cam. Case had played piano in the University dance band, and Malcolm and Martin became immediate friends over Mrs. Haldane's magnificent piano.

Lowry never went home to Caldy during vacations, and Case brought him to the Case family's big Victorian house in the Birmingham suburb of Edgbaston for the Christmas vacation of 1930. "I want you to meet a true syphilophobe," Martin had told Ralph. Lowry arrived at New Street station in a blue shirt that appeared to have been worn three months, nor did he change it during his stay. On the way home they passed Needless Alley. A good title, Malcolm observed, for a jazz tune.

"Malcolm talked about syphilis so much that Mrs. Haldane thought he was actually infected. Not true, of course," Martin said, keeping an eye on the Great Dane. "He was terrified of girls, except in the most idealistic, remote way. I once tried to introduce him to a girl, a literary type, at Birmingham University, but he wouldn't go near her. He finally became angry because he thought we were making fun of him. He simply couldn't believe anyone wanted to meet him, nor was he ever able to accept the fact that his talents commanded great respect in others.

"At Cambridge, he lived in digs on Bateman Street for a couple of years. He would occasionally sleep on the floor under a table, wearing an old trilby Ralph gave him, because it reminded him of being in a ship's bunk. Malcolm's landlord had a clubfoot, which of course Malcolm attributed to syphilis, and he could hardly bear to eat or drink anything the landlord had touched.

"One night late we were on our way back to Malcolm's digs from the Cambridge station. A hideous old bag—which meant she must have been thirty—waylaid Malcolm, and the two disappeared behind a shed in a builder's yard on Bateman Street. Later, he said it had been a marvelous experience, being tossed off with a fur glove."

We left the Duke of York just as a black police car pulled up to clear the beatniks off the walk. We strolled over to the Fitzroy in Charlotte Street. Fitzrovia: the name appears on no maps, but once, before the lino and chrome, the Fitzroy

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was headquarters for many artists and writers. Fitzrovia was not really Soho, nor Bloomsbury, but an indeterminate area —and state of mind—bordering on both of them. T. E. Lawrence drank there. Everybody did.

We settled in over pints of bitter, and Martin, keeping an eye on the girls holding hands in the corner, continued. "In his Cambridge days, Malcolm worshipped physical prowess of any kind. He used to practice with his barbell in his digs, dropping it to the floor with a tremendous crash and much ceiling plaster. When he found I could do one of those difficult tricks with the barbell that taxed him considerably, he was lost in admiration. Typical of him that he should congratulate me instead of being jealous.

"He decided that he would teach me boxing. Beginning scientifically, correctly, academically, usually outside the Red Cow, our session would degenerate into bare-knuckle slogging matches, without the slightest ill-will. Then we would repair with black eyes and split lips to the bar.

"For all that, Malcolm was enormously strong. In 1932, I had received my Ph. D. and I was tatting about London with Malc, trying to find a job. One day we were walking along some street off Charing Cross Road. Malcolm was feeling particularly persecuted and wronged that afternoon. While we were passing a horse standing in the shafts of a cart, the horse made one of those snorting, raspberry, rubber-lip sounds that horses do, unutterably contemptuous, derision of the Fates. Beasts and inanimate objects were always conspiring against Malcolm. He swung. His first connected just below the cart-horse's ear, and the animal quivered and sank to its knees. Although no real harm was done to the horse, Malcolm was overwhelmed with a remorse that lasted for weeks."

Amid the smoke and beer, and in that latitude the long twilight that encouraged inventory, the three of us began to count up the losses. Martin Case had finally signed on for Kenya to help jack up the price of coffee there; the depression market had been poor for brilliant biochemists. Now he was in charge of the pathology lab at Wormwood Scrubbs prison,

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too old, he said, to join the brain drain. Ralph Case had performed surgery around the clock during the Blitz. Once he had played hot piano with bands in dance halls in Birmingham and Brighton.

We rolled around to the Marquis of Granby, which once had an old upright piano on which Ralph had accompanied Malcolm in such original Lowry numbers as "That's What I Mean."

"He was the kind of man," Ralph said, "one meets once or twice in a lifetime if one's lucky. He had a defenseless air that was irresistable. He placed himself in one's hands. The result was that various people were always adopting him. In those days, he was a perennial mascot.

"The three of us loved neologisms, and he was always twisting the language askew. Words like 'biniculars' and 'vetroloquist' left us, for some reason, gasping with laughter. They later turned up in *Ultramarine*, and the proofreader carefully corrected them. His own followers, people such as James Travers, cultivated what was known as a Malcolm-voice and also Malcolm-staggering, a strange little to-and-fro dance of joy he would perform when he first walked up to a bar.

"Malcolm's trustfulness made him the perfect butt for practical jokes. As a medical student, I had a textbook which depicted the effects of *adiposa dolorosa*, a particularly repellent type of obesity. I gravely diagnosed his slight beer gut as the first symptom, and he took it seriously for all of five minutes.

"He was frightened of people in charge. Once when we went into the University Club in Birmingham to wash up, Malcolm disappeared into a cubicle, and I decided to impersonate the janitor, yelling in a janitorial voice, 'I'm pretty well fed up with these buggers stinking with drink!' Malcolm cowered in the cubicle and would not come out until we told him the pubs closed in ten minutes. He was also terrified of facing his father's agents in London to collect his allowance. His father made only one stipulation, and that was that Malcolm had to present himself in person to receive the money. As a result, he frequently starved before he could

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pull himself together sufficiently to go around to see them."

The pub had turned brighter and louder, and we decided to go to The Wheatsheaf in Rathbone Place. On the way over, through the beginning of night, I asked Martin about the missing manuscript of *Ultramarine*. Ian Parsons, then a reader at Chatto & Windus, had left the MS unattended for a moment in a briefcase, and the briefcase was stolen from his auto.

"I received an incoherent telephone call from Malcolm saying that his work of years had gone for nought," Martin said. "He had kept no carbon, which was typical. He had no sense of practicalities. Once I saw him in a telephone booth, shouting into the wrong end of the receiver. When he learned his manuscript was gone, he blindly caught the first train to Birmingham. I had spent many days helping him by typing out the final fair copy, and secretly I had retrieved discarded sheets and carbons from wastepaper baskets and fire grates, and bound these together for my own enjoyment. He was out of his mind with relief when I presented him with my private copy. But he talked about the loss for years. He regarded it as a prime example of the Eumenidean conspiracy against him."

The Wheatsheaf was snazzier, lots of dark wood and good tweed and hot-potato laughter, bright young people with lots of hair cuddling in the booths. The place had the Dylan Thomas cachet. "I went up to Dylan once in here," Ralph Case said, "just to say how much I admired his poems. 'Hello, *dearie*,' he said; he was sneering. He thought I was trying to pick him up."

"We all drank as much as our pockets would allow in those days," Martin said, "and I don't suppose I was aware that Malcolm was headed for trouble until one morning when we were all in the Fitzroy after a late night. All of us ordered half-pints except Malcolm. In a firm voice he called for a treble gin, with emphasis on *treble*. At one point, his father insisted that he stay in temperance hotels such as the Kenilworth.

"During the summer of 1932, when I had a house in Cam-

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bridge and he was staying with me, he discovered two-and-a-half liters of a ninety-five per cent alcohol solution of limonene, an essential oil derived from lemon peel which I was using in some experiments. He was ecstatic. 'True fire water,' he called it, and proceeded to polish off most of it.

"The last time I saw him alive was in Birmingham in 1934. I don't remember why he or I were even there. We drank beer and played the piano in an appalling pub, and the fog swirled around and the rain never stopped. I went to Africa and he went on to New York and Mexico. Aiken had convinced the old man that his son was a genius, and Arthur Lowry had settled an income on Malcolm, as much to enable him to stay the hell away as anything else. In Liverpool, no geniuses need apply."

"Hurry up, please, it's time," the barmaids called. We chugalugged and joined the other voyagers outward bound. Rathbone Place began to fill up with people; some marched off singing. A tart standing in front of another pub bent over to scratch her knee. We rushed to assist her. "Can't jer see I'm *waiting* for someone in there? Careful with me *hose*!" We drove in silence through the streets. In the dim Cadogan lobby, I sat and read a poem that Lowry had given Martin Case in 1930. "So in our lives with what dark certainty we move, swiftly toward the magellan of our birth, the bourne is dangerous the noon unsighted we have known on this earth, I have worn my jackknife in my cap to catch the lightning at Cape Horn." Ralph Case had played the piano, "In a Mist." Erect and straightforward, the kindly doctor, when he began to play he had hunched into the music, cigarette dangling. He began to brood, turned inward. He became tough, jazzy, a late-nighter, bored with the clerks clutching their shop assistants, full of Chicago and Bix.

Perhaps Hugh Fermin had been right. The Consul had spiraled down that last long day while in Spain, the Battle of the Ebro was being lost. The Battle of the Ebro had drawn a line through every life. Englishmen had died in Spain; Hugh had almost died in Lowry. The times had little use for Hugh/Lowry. After Spain, nobody needed a handsome sailor lad

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with a ukelele, a bright charmer who yelled into the wrong end of the phone and read Gogol and talked so beautifully. Blame the booze and a cruel nursemaid, a dithering mother and a ramrod father who talked about disappointment when he spoke of his son; but the times, and England, they too created the Consul. His life contained overtones of ritual sacrifice, the young voyager who became the black magician. Lowry spanned the true Fall. Beginning with the Ebro, none could claim innocence again.

It rained the next day, a fine London moment to go to Parliament Hill in Hampstead, to where the "Taskersons" lived, that family of brawly boys whom the Consul had known briefly. Beginning with the Cases, Lowry had undertaken a series of adoptive families. For Taskersons, read Hepburns, a family full of action and incident. Patrick Hepburn, later killed in a climbing accident, was married to Anna Wickham, the poet. Malcolm had met Miss Wickham at a party in London. It was a case of mutual adoption at first sight. Lowry often stayed at the Hepburn house. After the loss of the *Ultramarine* manuscript, he rewrote most of the recovered carbons there. He was fond of the Hepburn boys, James and John, a rough lot who acted on the stage and performed song-and-dance numbers in music halls. More than fond, fascinated and awed by the clattery stage world.

The Ebro again. John was now in the Australian government. James was a former RAF squadron leader who retired because he got bored with all the mickey-mouse involved in putting on a jet-age space suit. Putting on the damned suit took longer than the flight. As we settled down to tea, rain fell in gusty swirls over Parliament Hill, where Guy Fawkes' followers were supposed to wait for the explosion that would scatter King James all over London.

"Malcolm was sometimes a bit much," James Hepburn said. "He had a tremendous sense of preordination, and he was shattered by the loss of his manuscript, even though for all purposes it was recovered. He ran the entire destiny thing rather hard at times. I wonder if it was really necessary, for instance, for him to go to sea. He tended to present himself

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as the sensitive young poet who had to submit to the crude, cruel, indifferent forces of life.

"One night he and I were sitting around the fire drinking. Mother was there. Malcolm had discovered a one-month-old white rabbit that my younger brother George was keeping in a box in the morning room. He was fondling the rabbit in his lap as he talked. Suddenly the rabbit went limp; it was dead. Somehow Malcolm had broken its neck. He had large, coarse, artisan's hands and occasionally reminded me of a young boar. He was absolutely decimated by the death of the rabbit and went into an awful funk. Destiny had struck again. 'Look what happens when I try to touch something beautiful,' and all that. It was bound up with the fact that he never could seem to find a girl when everyone else had one. I tell you, it was a poignant moment.

"Malcolm talked about his father a great deal, and I seem to remember that it was something his father said to him that made him go to sea. All the elder Lowry anecdotes became boring to me. After all, everyone's parents are a cross. My own mother was always dragging me off to meetings of literary societies in Paris, when I would have preferred to play cricket, and it didn't warp me unduly because I didn't let it. The fact that Malcolm could drink sixteen pints of beer and a half-bottle of whiskey somehow evened things up between him and the old man.

"But God, he was utterly marvelous on the whole. He had a way of looking up at you from under his eyes, foxy and twinkling. Mischief, the real thing. Remembering him makes all those years seem—real. My wife was cleaning out a shed in back recently and came across several schoolboy exercise books full of Malcolm's handwriting, and what appeared to me to be moldy notes for *Ultramarine*. She burned them." A stricken look crossed Hepburn's eyes.

"Well," said Mrs. Hepburn, a willowy, progressive, practical woman, "you can't expect me to keep all the paper that's passed through *this* house."

Stricken myself, I caught a series of taxis, buses, trains and people that led me eventually to Twickenham. Arthur Cal-

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der-Marshall, novelist, BBC savant, and Jack London Buff, met me at the station. We drove past Alexander Pope's house and Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, monuments to an orderly literature. Ducks from the Thames whirred across Calder-Marshall's garden, and sculls clicked and splashed on the river.

"Lowry was fabulous as opposed to legendary. He had only a fragmentary relationship to society, one of those strange men to whose genius any limelight was fatal. I think he regarded drinking as an essential part of the creative act," Calder-Marshall told me as we took the genteel sunlight in his garden.

"I met him in 1934 at the end of a vinous literary luncheon at the Astoria Hotel in Greek Street. He came in, and Hamish Miles, a reader at Jonathan Cape, asked Malcolm what he was doing now. 'I have a dead white rabbit in my suitcase, and I'm trying to dispose of it,' he replied, and told us what had happened at Anna Wickham's. I introduced myself and suggested that he give the rabbit to the waiter to put in the dust bin. He was astonished by the simplicity and good sense of my idea. We had a couple of pints and liked each other immediately.

"But as I say, he was not quite in touch. In *Ultramarine*, he has several sailors playing bridge, and there's a bit of dialogue with some bidding in it. When I pointed out that no bridge player would make those kind of bids and that he should change the dialogue, he said, 'No, don't you understand, that's the way I *heard* it.' He also dropped in a number of quotes from Homer, even though I don't think he knew a word of Greek. And always the butt. After *Ultramarine* appeared, the public library at Hull banned the book for some obscure reason. A brief newspaper story appeared, and Hamish Miles gave the cutting to Malcolm, saying, 'See, you're famous.' Malcolm took him quite seriously and proudly showed the cutting around at the Fitzroy until we laughed him out of it.

"I suppose the reason we behaved as we did in those days was because we were reacting against the Victorian moral

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capital we had inherited, a worthless estate, as the First War proved. I don't really suppose Malcolm was any more eccentric than the rest of us. He was perhaps more intense about some things. He talked about his writing as though it were a part of his body; he *lived* it. That's why he was not able to get going on *Volcano* until he had actually become the Consul."

We lingered in the garden until almost dark, talking about some of the rotten, funny things that had happened to Lowry. "He should have stayed in Canada," Calder-Marshall said. "America was capable of giving him a fresh start, never mind the past. England and Mexico were nemeses, too many painful re-encounters. After the success of *Volcano*, he began wandering around Europe, and that was fatal." A kitten limped through the shrubbery, a thorn in its foot. The ducks whirred across the garden like huge bats. I went to a Greek restaurant in Soho and, contemplating murals of the Acropolis, began to have the delusion that England had slipped its moorings and was drifting and would eventually run aground off Fire Island.

Brighton, they say, is now one of the nicest places to live in London. I caught a Brighton Belle the next day to see "Peter" Churchill, Victor Spencer, Viscount Churchill, at seventy-four, a lithe, intense man who had not aged because he had refused to quit laughing; his face had the puckish toughness of Steve McQueen's. After his father had disinherited him, he had lived in Hollywood, among other places, by his wits. His recipe for longevity: plenty of sex and scramble for money. "Come right down," he had said on the phone. "I have a funny old dump, and we'll have a drink and lunch and talk about Malcolm."

He had not known Lowry in the young days, but in some ways, he was the only one who detected in him, and appreciated, the remnants of Hugh. In 1949 or thereabouts, John Davenport had brought Lowry to Joan Black's home at Vernon in the Seine valley to recover from an especially disastrous run of drinking. Joan placed Lowry in a village hospital operated by the Sisters of Charity, where he charmed the nuns into bringing him bottles of *vin rouge*. He lay there

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drinking wine, eating hardboiled eggs, and writing long letters to Conrad Aiken in a three-by-five notebook in a microscopic hand. "Poor fellow, he's bored stiff," Joan said, locked up the liquor cabinet, and brought him home.

"Nobody could control him, but I was able to tune in on his frequency," Churchill said. "Once, after Joan and I were married and were living at Sneden's Landing on the Hudson, Malcolm came through with his second wife Margerie on their way to Europe. Hurricane Edna was headed toward New York. The morning the Lowrys were to leave, Malcolm disappeared. I finally found him in his pajamas in a tree, clutching a swaying branch, which was swaying because of his weight, not because of the wind. 'Hang on,' he shouted, 'hurricane's coming!' Instead of ordering him out of the tree, I simply asked if I could borrow his razor. He forgot his roped-to-the-mast fantasy, climbed down, and we got him packed and onto the boat. He taught me a great deal; he could detect the ptomaine in any conversation. He taught me how to listen. After Joan died, his was the voice I most wanted to hear."

We whipped through Brighton in Churchill's silver 1959 Buick convertible, his man Ron Scrivener at the wheel, burly, Hampshire, ex-Royal Marine commando; I and Julie, a black-and-white border collie, in the back seat. Whiskey and steak at the Castle, Julie sitting on my feet under the table, and then *zoom* down tiny Sussex lanes to Ripe, while we talked about the habits of German drivers. Sussex in May: green, green, soft, the wind full of the sea.

Lowry had spent a good part of those ten years after *Volcano* looking for Hugh, trying to find the old Fitzroy, but instead, in New York, London and Paris, in Rome and Taormina, it was the Consul and the Farolito waiting in the shadows outside the pension. That night he had gone to Chalvington for cheese and instead returned with a bottle of gin from the Yew Tree. He had been writing a poem to his wife, remembering the nest they had built for themselves in Canada, but then he threatened her with the bottle when she tried to take it away from him. The bottle broke. She ran

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The grave in the medieval churchyard of St. John the Baptist, Ripe, Sussex.

next door, and he, full of the rage of a husband who jumps into his car and drives anywhere at all right into a tree, popped down twenty sodium amytals. A miscalculation. After the coroner's ambiguous verdict, The Rev. Frederick Talbot Baines read the burial service according to the rites of the Church of England. They buried Lowry next to the grave of a lame, kindly shopkeeper in the churchyard of St. John the Baptist; the parish is recorded in the Domesday Book.

Churchill and I stood beside Lowry's grave. Lichens had begun to form on the headstone, and already it could have been a century old. Americans know few appropriate gestures. I was able only to take a photograph, but Churchill could weep without shame; and instead of bringing flowers, Martin Case had once poured a bottle of Flower's Ale over the old-fashioned hummock.

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Back in Brighton, Churchill's flat began to fill up with people by some unnoticed signal. Charlotte Haldane came in, still beautiful, with bright eyes that stopped you in mid air. "I was never in love with Malcolm," she said. "He had a grain of genius. He adored Scott Fitzgerald's work. *Under the Volcano* seemed to me to be *dreamed up;* that was a weakness of his. We sometimes wrote poetry together side by side. He needed to drink in order to communicate. I finally had to banish John Davenport and him from Roebuck House for showing up one night too drunk to admit.

"Malcom was extremely beautiful, brown gold hair, small, triangular blue eyes, incredibly white teeth. Sweet, with beautiful manners. He wanted to be a tough guy, to prove that he was tough and could take it. He would liked to have been a tall man."

Tall, handsome young men circulated through the flat, lighting one's cigarette and refilling drinks. Hermione Baddeley, clad in leopard slacks, leopard blouse, and leopard coat, complained of the terrors of the Los Angeles freeways. A bald painter all in black glowered. Anita Bolster suggested that I go to her country place in the west of Ireland for a holiday. Instead I caught a minicab to the station, and all the way back to London watched the black rain streaking the train windows.

They showed us a movie over the Atlantic. At Kennedy, the passengers sat silent while an immigration inspector marched down the aisle, his head clicking left, then right, in a mechanical rhythm, looking for signs of sickness. The police were there to protect the latest exiles, the Rolling Stones. Thus one comes again to the New World.

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Return

From the bedroom you can see
straight to the fringe of the woods
with a cross-staved gate to re-
enter childhood's world:
the pines
wait, dripping.
Crumbling black-
berries, seized from a rack
of rusty leaves, maroon tents
of mushroom, pillars uprooting
with a dusty snap;
as the bucket
fills, a bird strikes from the bushes
and the cleats of your rubber boot crush
a yellow snail's shell to a smear
on the grass
(while the wind starts
the carrion smell of the dead fox
staked as warning).
Seeing your former
self saunter up the garden path
afterwards, would you flinch,
acknowledging
that sensuality,
that innocence?

—JOHN MONTAGUE

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Fragment

('the hidden harmony is better ....'
—Heraclitus)

laughed

thought of the coins
beside

the wrinkled kleenex

is the shoe?

how 'this age'
will bear it to be
excluded the hand
against
your knowledge: her
secrets, what

she looked like your eye

says everyone at once

excludes design of
spontaneity that

before us stretch

the young girls'

neither firm
nor soft

perfection

—MICHAEL HELLER

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Air

1

who sound loves
needs a plunge

beneficent duke out
around his fief
caught poachers at it

we were out of line
here and there
and sang so

2

indeed hung up
we missed you
asked where you'd gone

.... spreading
everywhere

3

Glad we met
you
he told the guest
who stayed

4

The May never came

the ample woman asked
about

you going and going
at once

—MICHAEL HELLER

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Dear

Rosalyn Drexler

Dear Perry,

I am so tired. So very tired that I started writing this letter all wrong. Haven't been any too well and hot weather coming on. I have a very sore thumb on my right hand. But I never give up my work. I never have gotten all my housecleaning done as yet but except to maby before long. I don't know why I am telling you all this for I suppose you wouldn't give a hang about what I do or say. Anyway, I have never forgotten what you told me to do, go on your way, and you would go on yours. Well that did it. I am trying to do just that and keep straight. I never go out at night dancing. I haven't danced since before I was married to Mr. Culp. But I often thought I would love to dance, especially when I hear good music over the radio. I use to love to hear poor Buddy Clark sing. His voice was very good. For Carnation Contented Hour. You remember. Well Perry, I have heard you say you still loved me. But, I still think that would be a big mistake, for I am up in years and you are still a young man. You had better think it all over and marry a young

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lady. I really believe Connie loves you for I heard her sing "If I Could Only Make Him Love Me." We can be friends and when you and she get married you can call on me. I will never marry again. I am very sorry to tell you this. Why haven't you ever written me a line if you love me so much? This is the 14th letter. This was very painful for my thumb. I think the nail will come off. Don't have hopes of getting me to marry you. It's all over. Lot's of good luck to you and whoever you get. But not me. As ever your friend,

JESSIE Lee Culp

Jessie Lee Culp was sixteen when she got married, eighteen when she had twin daughters, and twenty-five when she had her son. She was fifty years old when she fell in love with Perry Como. She loved her children dearly but her problem was, she thought, that she couldn't be in two places at once. She knew that it would make her children happy if she would remarry their father, but as she put it in a letter to Perry:

...darling I don't love him, and I know the thought of me sleeping with him would kill me because I don't have no desire for him whatsoever, and I know I'll be making a big mistake and be very unhappy, what shall I do darling? I'm madly in love with you, that I don't like to marry him just for security. All my relatives want me to remarry him again so I'll have a home but I keep telling them, I'll think about it. I don't tell them anything about me being in love with you, they would think I was crazy, that I was asking for the impossible thing to happen. So I'm keeping it to myself, and if such a thing would really happen that you and I meant something to each other my relatives would die with envy! they are so jealous. But now I'll leave it up to you darling, there's nothing I can do without your will in

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wanting me. Everything seems so dark around me, that I'm turning to the one and only man I love, and if you can't help me in wanting me for your own, I guess there's nothing else I can do, but try to remarry my former husband, that's if he'll marry me on account of him knowing that I don't care for him. I just can't get around him and play the part as tho I love him when I don't feel like getting near him. And anyway my heart is with you twenty-four hours a day, that all I need is a call from you telling me that you love me and want me to come to you, and I'll fly by your side. But I guess there's nothing you can do, so I might as well go to sleep and not listen to those maniacs who try to say things about you. I know they are bothering you too. They told me. Well let's see what the next day brings. Darling, I hope this letter isn't boring you. If it is I'm sorry. Hope to see you real soon. Love and kisses I remain,

Yours alone,
Jessie Lee Culp

Tall and skinny, not regal and willowy, with a cap of auburn permanented hair hugging her ears, Jessie Lee Culp prepared herself for a brave cruise to Hawaii—to try to forget. But she didn't succeed. His records were everwhere. On shipboard she won a Charley McCarthy doll, for "Best Hat" in the *Guess The Song Title* contest. Her song was "My Heart Cries For You." Its basic form (the hat) came from the cover of a box of chocolates, and the tears were crystal droplets torn with great excitement from the neckline of a dressy blouse, and then glued dripping to the heart. It was no small achievement for her. Her knuckles were swollen from arthritis, and intricate fingerwork was extremely painful. Her hat was her crowning glory. She wore it as an open confession, but her smiling face didn't allow it to be taken seriously.

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A shipboard companion asked: "Isn't that in the new Perry Como album? I think he introduced it a few weeks ago on T.V." He pretended that the question was a casual one. Jessie Lee Culp covered up cleverly by saying that she wasn't sure where she had heard it, but that it had stuck with her because of the melodic tune.

She sat Charley McCarthy on her lap and changed his name to C.C. Charley Como, their son. He had come to her through the invisible sexual intervention of Perry Como who had to keep things secret himself, or ruin his reputation.

There was a party in the main dining room the night before the ship docked, and a Mr. Gerard Blakely took photos of everyone seated at the table. There were thirteen people present, not counting Charley McCarthy alias Charley Como. Jessie fed him cake under the table so that the captain would not accuse him of being a stowaway and lock him up in the brig. At the party, Jessie wore a sailor hat and a long flowered rayon dress. She wrote a few sentences on the photographs that she sent Perry:

> ...Arthur Godfrey would be surprised to see his supper club taken over by the marines and Charley McCarthy who is our C.C.—one under the chandelier is Capt. Bill Frink—tell it to the marines—third from left is girl Gina Jerome famous concert violinist and composer of songs and instrumentals—she and Clara Roskefeller had the same music teacher—who has passed away—on the table the boat in center is all lighted up by electricity, also on top deck small people are dancing (if you ask me I will) they are controlled by electricity too. When we started we sang "Aloha" and received our parting Lei—when we arrived in San Francisco we sang "Red Sails In The Sunset" and docked in San Pedro—I am the hostess closest to front —Charley McCarthy was a lovely token of your love, but he is a stowaway, but not found out yet.
>
> J.L.C.

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The Sunday Coloroto section of the News ran a feature story on Perry showing him with his family. Jessie Lee Culp became agitated, indignant; she wanted him to acknowledge her child, Charley. To care for him. And so she took pen in hand and dashed off an angry letter:

Mr. Como Dear Sir,

Just a line to let you know I am through with you and to make it plain. I found out you were married. And have a wife and three children. What the devil do you think some people are. I am not a dumey now and I mean it. What of our son who was not in the photograph with you and the others. How do you think he felt? I am a sick woman and I won't have any of your nasty stunts—everybody yelling at me singing nasty songs. I am getting tired of it all. And I don't want you. I don't ever intend to marry you. So don't expect me. I am no dunce. Run along. By-by. For ever.

P.S. Poor Kay Starr even begs for you to come back to her. Why don't you make up with her. I have heard her almost cry as she sang "Please Jack Come Back." She surely loves you and she's young. I am getting up in years as I told you. Have you told your wife? About me and Kay. And the boy C.C.

J. L. Culp

Every night Jessie and the Charley McCarthy dummy said their prayers together. Then she tucked him in and put out the lights. He slept well and did not open his eyes till his mother sat him up for breakfast the next morning. He had orange juice and cereal and coffee, which Jessie ate after first putting the spoon to his mouth. Her other children who were grown and who lived with their father thought that Jessie was a very talented ventriloquist, and urged her to do her

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act whenever they came to see her. She taught C.C. to sing his father's songs. He learned "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me," "Til The End Of Time," "It's Too Late Now," and "Bring Back The Thrills." She knew that if Perry had a chance to see their son he would love him and then things would be okay. She found out his address from a screen magazine and tried to arrange a meeting:

Dear,

C.C. is dying to meet you in person. He needs you as you are, not on T.V. Besides I've heard that you won't be on T.V. next year, is that right? And we'll lose you. I hope not and I'll always feel that whatever they do to us is partly my fault. I wish you could tell me what to do. If I thought not watching your show would help I'd do that, if you want me to forget you I'll do that —anything or doesn't it make any difference what I do? But would you do this for me, I know where you live. I've known for some time. Would you please meet me where you turn off Port Washington Blvd on to your street on your way home from the studio. I'll be on the other side of the road. I was there once before, I think you passed me. Do you have a dark colored cadillac? If you can't talk to me would you please just hand me a note? Please do this for me and for C.C. Don't think I'm throwing myself at you, I'm not —I have to see you and talk to you.

With all sincerity,
Jesty Chesty (not pesty) Culp

She went to Port Washington Blvd. turn off and waited on the other side of the road. Charley was wrapped in an old receiving blanket. His bulbous, staring eyes were lidded (like a spoiled can of food about to pop.) There was a massive tie-up of traffic in the area: flammable liquid had leaked out of an overturned truck carrying propane gas. The police roped

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off a large part of the road and all vehicles were directed towards another route. Perry's dark-colored Cadillac did not come that way. The area remained closed. It was a warm night and Jessie Lee Culp walked home carrying C.C. She was convinced that They had conspired again to separate her from her loved one. She hummed "Till The End Of Time" to herself as she walked, and gained strength for the coming ordeal of fighting off Devils, Evils, Them, Maniacs; all of whom were waiting at home to harass her and make her feel like a harlot.

At the agency that handled Perry Como's mail, a secretary scanned Jessie Lee Culp's latest communication to Perry for a request for photos, or tickets to his show. There was nothing to circle in red, nothing asked for that the agency could supply, and so she tossed it into the wastebasket, where it lay fully supported by hundreds of other letters that had also been casually cantilevered into position by her hand, and disposition.

Mrs. J. L. Culp had bought special paper for her letters to Perry. She changed from white to pink with a rose corsage in the left-hand corner. It was very feminine. She wet her index finger with a drop of Evening in Paris perfume and sweetened the letter by rubbing her finger over its surface. Then she wrote:

> Dear,
>
> I don't know what else to do. I haven't any pride left. I'm all broken up. Couldn't you hire me as your maid Perry? I've got to be near you or bust. Just how bad can things get for me? You know, you don't have to answer my letters, you can call me. I'm in the phone book. Mr. Culp lives in another part of the city so don't be afraid to call. You are glad to hear from me, aren't you? I notice T-V magazine said you were on All Star Revue program but I did not see you. Why not be a guest on the Stork Club program?

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We do not need to worry about the weather
As long as you and I can be together
Rain or shine I'm yours and you're mine
So why worry about the weather?
X Cross my heart.
I love you.

P.S. I may be wearing glasses when we meet so that I'll recognize you. I'm such a show off I haven't worn them lately. I took a picture of myself without them for you. Please find enclosed.
Jessie, Jessie, Jessie
(nom-de-plume) Lee General Culp

Jessie Lee Culp went to the movies to see *Cinderella* but C.C. didn't like it. He told Jessie that the prince looked like his daddy Perry Como. Jessie knew that the prince was Perry Como and that her feet were much too big for him. She had a sudden horrible thought: what if she shortened them, hacked off about one or two inches from the toes? Her instinct told her not to do it because the blood might color her dainty white stockings, and then the jig would be up. But C.C. got quiet and wouldn't talk to her for two days. When he finally spoke to her he blamed her for bringing him into a calamitous world. For making him a bastard. He said he didn't want to grow up. He didn't want to lose his virginity. He wanted to be an angel, and climb into the lap of God. Jessie wanted the best for him. She understood his insatiable longing for purity, and knew within her mother's heart that if he lived he would become broken, besmirched, and bewildered. Besides, Perry hadn't acted like a father, he deserved to suffer. Then he would notice her. She went for a train ride, to the end of the line, and after kissing C.C. good-by for the last time, she rolled him gently off the platform, into the path of an onrushing train, and ran laughing hysterically into the ladies room where she threw up. Her ties with heaven were now secure. C.C. would act as go-between for Jessie Lee Culp and God. If he didn't get lazy lying on top of all those soft clouds, he

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might even appear to her in her worst hours, and fan her fevered brow with his God-crafted wooden wings. But Perry had lost his claim to such comforts.

Beloved,

I have taken care of that wonderful gift you sent me during The cruise. The gift known as C.C. who lived and breathed through me after you. He was all I had. Tho you were what I wanted. Honey, I was willing to be a slave to you. I even rubbed lotion into my hands every time I did the dishes, and took regular diathermy in clinic. I spent part of my money on a static dust remover for your records. I taught Charley your songs and he inherited your talent. But life was never right and so I want to tell you that C.C. died on Thursday Eventide: May God rest his loving soul. He will never get involved with lonely and sick woman the way you do, and he has reached heaven as quick as was possible. There are many wonderful thoughts in "Let's Go To Church Next Sunday Morning." Thank you darling for telling me you understood. I want you to believe in me in all ways and not to listen to Those who would have you believe that I want sex with you. I have no objection to it, but would be tortured with remorse if it should interrupt our desperate period of mourning. Can't you feel that we are very close again? You were such a nice chap to sing "Where Will You Be When the Moon Shines?" Of course with my devastating sense of humor I thought I'd thrown so much mud at you in my last few letters that you were disgusted and wanted to set a good example. You know where I'll be? I'll be wearing a black dress and black shoes, black nylons, black slip, black brassiere and black undies. Seriously when you sang "Let's Go Through Life Side By Side" you

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were thinking I'm sure of praying as the greatest means of attaining our wish. By the way I'm not sure if I'm divorced or not, since I still have Mr. Culp's name. Notice the *C* and what it means. Notice the *P* and what it means. Parts of his name are known for what they mean everywhere, and now I'm stuck with it. By the way I'll copy the St. Anthony prayer and enclose it. Any prayer would do, I presume, but this one is very beautiful and complete. Aren't you sorry you never took the dear departed out to dinner and a good show? I saved his bow tie for you in case you were sorry and wanted to have something of him.

God bless you and keep you and until next week when we meet again through the written word, dream beautiful dreams, sweetheart. I love you, precious heart, with all my heart, eternally.

Yours,

Jess (Jes a wearyin' for you)

It was just as if C.C. were alive only better. Before he came floating into her sitting room the most marvelous odor filled the room, a mixture of violets and roses and ripe lemons. Even with the windows open the scent would not budge. And Jessie welcomed her son with love and respect. Gave him the best chair in front of the T.V. and placed a bowl of fruit at his side though he never touched it. He grew a lot in a short time and Jessie began to realize that he was a man. This puzzled her because she had thought that angels stayed the age they died. Growth in heaven seemed like a waste to her. The birthdays would never end, the celestial candles would crowd out everything else and cause a terrible heat. Then, what would be the difference between Heaven and Hell? She asked the angel Charley Como what the difference was between Heaven and Hell. And C.C. answered her that Heaven was when you didn't know you were in Hell, and that Hell was a hell of a punishment. He hadn't thought it

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out but promised her many other answers, some of them extremely authoritative, and some of them beautifully worded to compliment her state of mind.

After he was gone she would sit in his chair to determine if he had really been comfortable. She bought a new purple velvet cushion for him and wanted to add a brass name plate like they have for reserved pews in church, but her money ran out. She knew that Perry would certainly not send her any amount of money even in the excellent cause of a chair in memorial to their only issue together. With a set of Magic Markers and two-inch marking tape, she calligraphed a multicolored identification pastiche, and pressed the tape on with her sore, sacrificial thumb. C. C. so admired the chair that he began to spend more time on earth than in the sky. He'd materialize at any hour whether or not the T.V. was on, and sit down and wait for questions. He was a satisfactory oracle, only his mouth moved; his expression was one of durable kindness. Jessie Lee Culp listened and wondered at her son's swift elevation within the heavenly hierarchy. He was God's right-hand man. His advance information and soothing pronouncements came straight from the horse's mouth. He advised her to take up a craft such as shell pictures with religious themes, and promised her that by the time she had finished her first picture her fingers would uncoil completely and she could go on to another work of art, possibly the Crucifixion. That in time she would forget Perry Como and be a celebrity in her own right. She bought two different sets of do-it-yourself shell paintings at the five-and-dime store and started work that evening. But no go. Desolation filled her and a growing disbelief in C.C. and her bright future. It took her almost an hour to unweb her fingers and the remaining glue hung in rills and scabs from ten exaggerated knuckles. She could barely turn the knobs on her set. Every station change was a torture, it took the enjoyment out of home entertainment. For a few days she recovered in bed, nibbling on this and that, getting up only to relieve herself, or to open a new box of saltless Saltines. Then she'd wrap herself up again in blankets and fight off the many pervasive elements that insis-

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ted on pursuing her. One of these elements, that had at first been only a taunting voice, began to assume the well dressed, sporty look of Perry Como. Although he had just come from the golf course, he insisted that she participate in sexual intercourse with him immediately. She of course refused, but he was able, by breaking into thousands of pieces, to insinuate himself into every nook and cranny of her dank shivering figure. He entered her resisting body like minced clams folded thoroughly into cream cheese with a fast and heavy fork. Every part of her ached when he removed himself fragment by fragment, and then forced her to reassemble him. Actually that was the part she liked best: jigsaw puzzles. She could get even with him by hiding a piece and not completing him. Then he would have to hang around for a long time before she allowed him to return to his wife. His visits made bearable the knowledge that during the summer his show would be on vacation. It occurred to her that when he was not available there would be others who might sing to her: Frank, Bing, Arthur... they couldn't all be gone at the same time. She did not regard her possible shift in allegiance as being unfaithful to Perry. They sometimes sang the same songs and in the past had offered to transmit messages from Perry to her as an act of friendship. It was good for a man to have friends who knew his deepest secrets. She wondered if they had known about C.C. It was time to discuss their summer apart. Jessie wrote to Perry:

Darling,

Maby you think I don't know that June will be your last time with me. I want to thank you for your regular visits to my home which is a distance from your studio. Yesterday Aunt Mabel called and almost guessed that I was seeing you. She is the most jealous of all of them and I don't care what they think. I'll never lose my love for you. Didn't you know never to force a woman? But I am getting used to it. I don't think I can have babies any more. C.C. was the last one. He sends

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his regards from on high and says he's watching over you in spite of your actions toward his legitimacy. Many of the kings of England did the same thing. Still it turned out for the best. Well Perry, the old question still comes to me: "What's wrong with our love?" It couldn't be deeper or stronger. Yet we always fail. Should I fight harder? Last night stunned me with how many times you returned. I marked it in my appointment book with four X's. Aren't we lucky to respond that way. I never did with Mr. Culp, as you know. Now my fingers and my back are hurting from being in a slump. Boy, I am getting up in years. I'll never ask you to marry me and break up a happy home. Many younger girls envy that autographed picture you once sent me prepaid. It was happy, and snappy, and nice of you pappy. Don't get crappy. This is almost the last letter I'll write you. I kept my end up but you never do, so what's the use. Give my regards to Bing, Arthur, and Frank (who are my other favorites). Attaboy Perry, Chin up.

Sincerely,
Jessie Lee Culp

The next day only Charley Como came to see Jessie Lee Culp. He frisked around like a six year old: hid her bathrobe and slippers, threw the soap under the bathtub, burned the rice which she was dieting on because of high blood pressure, and caused the phone to ring continuously in her ears while she was trying to listen to Perry sing "Hold Me In Your Arms." He acted really crazy and frightened his mother terribly. She hid in the closet till he stopped playing tricks on her; she came out as he took his usual seat in front of the T.V. But just for spite he put both feet smack on the Vista-vision screen that had been scrupulously polished. He also carelessly knocked down with his elbow the bowl of fruit that she had so

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lovingly made full for him. As the fruit rolled across her favorite rug, it made grainy rot-wet patches which flattened the nap, and surrounded Mrs. Culp and C.C. with an earthy garbage-pail aroma. She just couldn't stop crying. She cried and cried as each fruit was swept up into her hand. No jai alai player fully equipped with wicker scoop could have handled the ball with such excellent form as did Jessie Lee Culp with oranges and apples. Her sporting hand formed a permanent cup, but she could not drink out of it or hold a brush to her snagged hair. Somehow she always managed to jam a pencil or pen into her hand and keep it secure, while she wrote her letters. She hollered at C.C. and told him to go back where he had come from. To go on his way and she would go on hers. It was the same argument Perry and she had had the night before.

C.C. lifted himself off the chair, swinging on stiffened arms like an ape. His mouth clicked open and shut but he said nothing. It was very Spanish the way his mouth was constructed—like a castanet tied together with elastic. In one giant swing, one last thrust towards the ceiling, he broke away from his family sojourn and entered into his daily heaven, forever. J.L.C. explained to herself that a boy had to leave home sometime, and he might as well do it before the big heat; heaven must be *so* cool! She longed to go there too. To wear white that was whiter than white. To billow in the wind, and play the harp. To observe mortals lovingly from an exalted position and to be in the vicinity of her son as he went about his executive duties for God. She wondered if Gabriel was as good a horn player as Perry Como was a singer; if so she would offer to supply the lyrics to his age-old melody and make it sound not so much a summons as a delightful invitation. But she didn't know how to die before her time. She looked even younger than she was, and she felt young except for her back, and her fingers, and she was just beginning to live. So heaven would have to wait!

That night she began her last letter to Perry. She wanted to let him off the hook gently. She didn't want to disturb him too much and thus lower the quality of his performance.

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It was her magnanimous wish to leave him as she had found him, a crowd pleaser. They had had their fling, and now... he had her permission to satisfy Connie or Kay, or M.M. on Arthur's show. She did not mention C.C. She reassured him of her continuing good will, and wished him luck even though at times she realized he had more of it than most, and certainly more luck than she had had in a month of Sundays. Most of all she told him: "It's all over!" But for the personal touch, she began her letter with an intimate disclosure:

Dear Perry,

I am so tired. So very tired that I started writing this letter all wrong...

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Tele/vision

In the beginning of my love wild hearts and trees. Greenness. The waves
at the end of the street. Dynamite proposals. To be a man,
or a white thing crawling through nuns' dreams. In
the beginning of my heart we walked and rode
motorcycles into each other, killing each other,
fucked japs, in the beginning, and were sammy davis
for allen ginsberg's frank sinatra. the beginning,
of the alien. of the path back to my self. the cold
illinois skeletons of doestoevsky. in the track crossing,
in the movie feeling (that's saturday evening culture
for the blind). I hurt myself. I struck and stabbed
and wounded my own gentle flesh. I began. This sliding
talking pictures of old relatives sudden heroes who were
dead spitos of the winded-up-leroy heading down belmont avenue
thinking he was grey. James Edward's nose was too ugly hunched open
like that. And the other dude, the doctor, calling him dirty names
invisible kike of the mind. In the beginning I was not born but plotted.
They came north to make me. Brain sparks and the cold cinder wheel.
Sharpened. Remembering. African dances for tarzan, until the jungle pots
boil darkness and the hot sun fashions it into black heroes. Run out of
the south, from falling down wells, from cursing in my sleep, and the dead
fall through the space "of all endeavour." Bullshit, I limped along with
the rest of the niggers, and was beautiful then to invisible greys. They
found me, found each at the end of the long slaughter house. Who will save
the jesusnigger? Who will come back smiling and licking him silent knowledge.
Who will be the final coming attraction and beautiful character actor of
my bonafide creation? The me's of it. The strong I's. Yell. They. CRAAAAAA
AYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYVE to good faith blessing. Ahhh. The nature.
The smell. I am whole.

I am whole.

—LEROI JONES

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Mr. Rainman

In the rain, get your hands off my trickling face!
A damp rug
my chilled hands
Show that we have a visitor
A smudge
in a soggy grey coat
And shoes that hiss on the diningroom table
We thought he needed a shave but that shadow on Mr. Rainman's cheek
meant he was covered with mosses and various greens growing there

O my pink-cheeked daughter
O my daughter in your ancient but yellowed white pinafore
what are you doing turning shyly

You stand out enough

—MICHAEL BENEDIKT

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Bedouin Tents

Gaily experienced and somewhat accidental
The disaster which overtook them
Surrounded the discameled travelers.

Swaying across the sunset
Suddenly seemed of intimate appeal
Now that there was no way to go

And they departed with a disqualified enthusiasm.
No one really understood
When they returned, exactly what they were eating:

A kind of herb
Whose former existence had been tubuliflorous
Yet at the root, completely white and unstained

How can you travel without transportation?
There is too much territory. How can you eat
Without gardens? There is not enough earth.

In the tents of the professionals
They have made an interesting impression
Which floats away in the morning breezes.

—MICHAEL BENEDIKT

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I

Solomon's Antiques. Solomon, buried in his junk, is reading the paper, drinking coffee from a containerm, smoking. Enter Martin.

Martin
Excuse me.

Solomon
Yes, sir.

Martin
I'm looking for a Christmas present.

Solomon
Well that depends which Christmas.

Martin
(Smiles) Well, let's say this Christmas.

Solomon (Lighting a half-burned cigarette)
For this Christmas is very difficult. What're you got in mind?

Martin
(Looking around)
I don't know. I went to all the department stores, walked down all the streets. Everything is either junk or unnecessary.

Solomon (Recoughs, blows his nose) Excuse me.
My boy, you're not in the swim. Sit down, take it easy. There.. there's a nice Louis [redacted] Fourteen[redacted] chair, sit down.

Martin
I'm exhausted.

Solomon
So is everybody. The first step to wisdom is to stop. Whatever it is, stop it. Then maybe you'll find out. For who is the present?

Martin
My wife.

Solomon
For a wife is difficult.
(Looks around) (Points his thumb over his shoulder)
I got here a nice harp.

Martin
What the hell would she do with a harp?

Solomon
She'll have it. What do you mean?--what does she do with anything?

Martin
No, you got me wrong. I love her.

Manuscript page of an unpublished Miller play.

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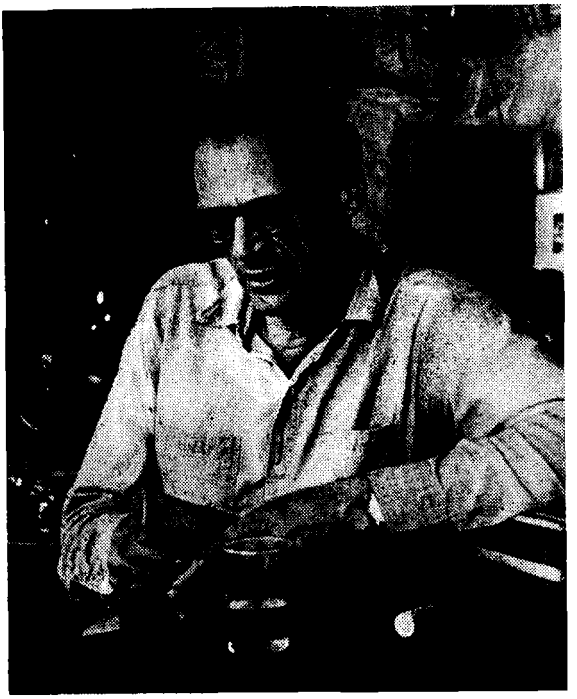
Arthur Miller

An Interview



Arthur Miller's white farmhouse is set high on the border of the roller-coaster hills of Roxbury and Woodbury, in Connecticut's Litchfield County. The author, brought up in Brooklyn and Harlem, is now a country man. His house is surrounded by the trees he has raised—native dogwood, exotic katsura, Chinese scholar, tulip and locust. Most of them were flowering as we approached his house for our interview last spring. The only sound was a rhythmic hammering echoing from the other side of the hill. We walked to its source, a stately red barn, and there found the playwright, hammer in hand, standing in dim light amid lumber, tools, and plumbing equipment. He welcomed us, a tall, rangy, good-looking man with a weathered face and sudden smile, a scholar-farmer in horn-rimmed glasses and high work shoes. He invited us in to judge his prowess: he was turning the barn into a guest house (partitions here, cedar closets there, shower over there...). Carpentry, he said, was his oldest hobby—he had started at the age of five.

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We walked back past the banked iris, past the hammock, and entered the house by way of the terrace, which was guarded by a suspicious basset named Hugo. Mr. Miller explained as we went in that the house was silent because his wife, photographer Inge Morath, had driven to Vermont to do a portrait of Bernard Malamud, and that their three-year-old daughter Rebecca was napping. The living room, glassed-in from the terrace, was eclectic, charming: white walls patterned with a Steinberg sketch, a splashy painting by neighbor Alexander Calder, posters of early Miller plays, photographs by Mrs. Miller. It held colorful modern rugs and sofas, an antique rocker, oversized black Eames chair, glass coffee table supporting a bright mobile, small peasant figurines—souvenirs of a recent trip to Russia—unique Mexican candlesticks and strange pottery animals atop a very old carved Spanish table, these last from their Paris apartment; and plants, plants everywhere.

The author's study was in total contrast. We walked up a green knoll to a spare single-roomed structure with small louvered windows. The electric light was on—he could not work by daylight, he confided. The room harbors a plain slab desk fashioned by the playwright, his chair, a rumpled gray day bed, another webbed chair from the thirties, and a bookshelf with half a dozen jacketless books. This is all, except for a snapshot of Inge and Rebecca, thumbtacked to the wall. Mr. Miller adjusted a microphone he had hung crookedly from the arm of his desk lamp. Then, quite casually, he picked up a rifle from the day bed and took a shot through the open louvers at a woodchuck who, scared but reprieved, scurried across the far slope. We were startled—he smiled at our lack of composure. He said that his study was also an excellent duck blind.

The interview began. His tone and expression were serious, interested. Often a secret grin surfaced, as he reminisced. He is a storyteller, a man with a marvelous memory, a simple man with a capacity for wonder, concerned with people and ideas. We listened at our ease as he responded to questions.

INTERVIEWER

Vosnessensky, the Russian poet, said when he was here that the landscape in this part of the country reminded him of his

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Sigulda*—that it was a "good microclimate" for writing. Do you agree?

MILLER

Well, I enjoy it. It's not such a vast landscape that you're lost in it, and it's not so suburban a place that you feel you might as well be in a city. The distances—internal and external—are exactly correct, I think. There's a *foreground* here, no matter which way you look.

INTERVIEWER

After reading your short stories, especially "The Prophecy" and "I Don't Need You Any More," which have not only the dramatic power of your plays but also the description of place, the *foreground*, the intimacy of thought hard to achieve in a play, I wonder: is the stage much more compelling for you?

MILLER

It is only very rarely that I can feel in a short story that I'm right on top of something, as I feel when I write for the stage. I am then in the ultimate place of vision—you can't back me up any further. Everything is inevitable, down to the last comma. In a short story, or any kind of prose, I still can't escape the feeling of a certain arbitrary quality. Mistakes go by—people consent to them more—more than mistakes do on the stage. This may be my illusion. But there's another matter; the whole business of my own role in my own mind. To me the great thing is to write a good play, and when I'm writing a short story it's as though I'm saying to myself, "Well, I'm only doing this because I'm not writing a play at the moment." There's guilt connected with it. Naturally I do enjoy writing a short story, it is a form that has a certain strictness. I think I reserve for plays those things which take a kind of excruciating effort. What comes easier goes into a short story.

* A resort in Lithuania.

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INTERVIEWER

Would you tell us a little about the beginning of your writing career?

MILLER

The first play I wrote was in Michigan in 1935. It was written on a spring vacation in six days. I was so young that I dared do such things, begin it and finish it in a week. I'd seen about two plays in my life, so I didn't know how long an act was supposed to be, but across the hall there was a fellow who did the costumes for the University theater and he said, "Well, it's roughly forty minutes." I had written an enormous amount of material and I got an alarm clock. It was all a lark to me, and not to be taken too seriously... that's what I told myself. As it turned out, the acts were longer than that, but the sense of the timing was in me even from the beginning, and the play had a form right from the start.

Being a playwright was always the maximum idea. I'd always felt that the theater was the most exciting and the most demanding form one could try to master. When I began to write, one assumed inevitably that one was in the mainstream that began with Aeschylus, and went through about 2500 years of playwriting. There are so few masterpieces in the theater, as opposed to the other arts, that one can pretty well encompass all of them by the age of nineteen. Today, I don't think playwrights care about history. I think they feel that it has no relevance.

INTERVIEWER

Is it just the young playwrights who feel this?

MILLER

I think the young playwrights I've had any chance to talk to are either ignorant of the past or they feel the old forms are too square, or too cohesive. I may be wrong, but I don't see that the whole tragic arch of the drama has had any effect on them.

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INTERVIEWER

Which playwrights did you most admire when you were young?

MILLER

Well, first the Greeks, for their magnificent form, the symmetry. Half the time I couldn't really repeat the story because the characters in the mythology were completely blank to me. I had no background at that time to know really what was involved in these plays, but the architecture was clear. One looks at some building of the past whose use one is ignorant of, and yet it has a modernity. It had its own specific gravity. That form has never left me; I suppose it just got burned in.

INTERVIEWER

You were particularly drawn to tragedy, then?

MILLER

It seemed to me the only form there was. The rest of it was all either attempts at it, or escapes from it. But tragedy was the basic pillar.

INTERVIEWER

When *Death of a Salesman* opened, you said to *The New York Times* in an interview that the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we're in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. Do you consider your plays modern tragedies?

MILLER

I changed my mind about it several times. I think that to make a direct or arithmetical comparison between any contemporary work and the classic tragedies is impossible because of the question of religion and power, which was taken for granted and is an *a priori* consideration in any classic tragedy. Like a religious ceremony, where they finally reached the

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objective by the sacrifice. It has to do with the community sacrificing some man whom they both adore and despise in order to reach its basic and fundamental laws and, therefore, justify its existence and feel safe.

INTERVIEWER

In *After The Fall*, although Maggie was "sacrificed" the central character Quentin survives. Did you see him as tragic or in any degree potentially tragic?

MILLER

I can't answer that, because I can't, quite frankly, separate in my mind tragedy from death. In some people's minds I know there's no reason to put them together. I can't break it—for one reason, and that is, to coin a phrase: there's nothing like death. Dying isn't like it, you know. There's no substitute for the impact on the mind of the spectacle of death. And there is no possibility, it seems to me, of speaking of tragedy without it. Because if the total demise of the person we watch for two or three hours doesn't occur, if he just walks away, no matter how damaged, no matter how much he suffers...

INTERVIEWER

What were those two plays you had seen before you began to write?

MILLER

When I was about 12, I think it was, my mother took me to a theater one afternoon. We lived in Harlem and in Harlem there were two or three theaters that ran all the time and many women would drop in for all or part of the afternoon performances. All I remember was that there were people in the hold of a ship, the stage was rocking—they actually rocked the stage—and some cannibal on the ship had a time bomb. And they were all looking for the cannibal: it was thrilling. The other one was a morality play about taking dope. Evidently there was much excitement in New York then about the Chinese and dope. The Chinese were kidnapping beauti-

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ful, blond, blue-eyed girls who, people thought, had lost their bearings morally; they were flappers who drank gin and ran around with boys. And they inevitably ended up in some basement in Chinatown where they were irretrievably lost by virtue of eating opium or smoking some pot. Those were the two masterpieces I had seen. I'd read some others, of course, by the time I started writing. I'd read Shakespeare and Ibsen, a little, not much. I never connected playwrighting with our theater, even from the beginning.

INTERVIEWER

Did your first play have any bearing on *All My Sons*, or *Death of a Salesman*?

MILLER

It did. It was a play about a father owning a business in 1935, a business that was being struck, and a son being torn between his father's interests and his sense of justice. But it turned into a near comic play. At that stage of my life I was removed somewhat. I was not Clifford Odets: he took it head-on.

INTERVIEWER

Many of your plays have that father-son relationship as the dominant theme. Were you very close to your father?

MILLER

I was. I still am, but I think, actually, that my plays don't reflect directly my relationship to him. It's a very primitive thing in my plays. That is, the father was really a figure who incorporated both power and some kind of a moral law which he had either broken himself or had fallen prey to. He figures as an immense shadow... I didn't expect that of my own father, literally, but of his position, apparently I did. The reason that I was able to write about the relationship, I think now, was because it had a mythical quality to me. If I had ever thought that I was writing about my father, I suppose I never could have done it. My father is, literally, a much more realistic guy than Willy Loman, and much more successful as

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a personality. And he'd be the last man in the world to ever commit suicide. Willy is based on an individual whom I knew very little, who was a salesman; it was years later that I realized I had only seen that man about a total of four hours in 20 years. He gave one of those impressions that is basic, evidently. When I thought of him, he would simply be a mute man: he said no more than 200 words to me. I was a kid. Later on, I had another of that kind of a contact, with a man whose fantasy was always overreaching his real outline. I've always been aware of that kind of an agony, of someone who has some driving, implacable wish in him which never goes away, which he can never block out. And it broods over him, it makes him happy sometimes or it makes him suicidal, but it never leaves him. Any hero, whom we even begin to think of as tragic, is obsessed, whether it's Lear or Hamlet or the women in the Greek plays.

INTERVIEWER

Do any of the younger playwrights create heroes—in your opinion?

MILLER

I tell you, I may be working on a different wave-length but I don't think they are looking at character any more, at the documentation of facts about people. All experience is looked at now from a schematic point of view. These playwrights won't let the characters escape for a moment from their preconceived scheme of how dreadful the world is. It is very much like the old strike plays. The scheme then was that someone began a play with a bourgeois ideology and got involved in some area of experience which had a connection to the labor movement—either it was actually a strike or, in a larger sense, it was the collapse of capitalism—and he ended the play with some new positioning vis-à-vis that collapse. He started without an enlightenment and he ended with some kind of enlightenment. And you could predict that in the first five minutes. Very few of those plays could be done anymore, because they're absurd now. I've found over the years

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that a similar thing has happened with the so-called absurd theater. Predictable.

INTERVIEWER

In other words, the notion of tragedy about which you were talking earlier is absent from this preconceived view of the world.

MILLER

Absolutely. The tragic hero was supposed to join the scheme of things by his sacrifice. It's a religious thing, I've always thought. He threw some sharp light upon the hidden scheme of existence, either by breaking one of its profoundest laws, as Oedipus breaks a taboo, and therefore proves the existence of the taboo, or by proving a moral world at the cost of his own life. And that's the victory. We need him, as the vanguard of the race. We need his crime. That crime is a civilizing crime. Well, *now* the view is that it's an inconsolable universe. Nothing is proved by a crime excepting that some people are freer to produce crime than others, and usually they are more honest than the others. There is no final reassertion of a community at all. There isn't the kind of communication that a child demands. The best you could say is that it is intelligent.

INTERVIEWER

Then it's aware...

MILLER

It's aware, but it will not admit into itself any moral universe at all. Another thing that's missing is the positioning of the author in relation to power. I always assumed that underlying any story is the question of who should wield power. See, in *Death of a Salesman* you have two viewpoints. They show what would happen if we all took Willy's viewpoint toward the world, or if we all took Biff's. And took it seriously, as almost a political fact. I'm debating really which way the world ought to be run; I'm speaking of psychology and

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the spirit, too. For example, a play that isn't usually linked with this kind of problem is Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. It struck me sharply that what is at stake there is the father's great power. He's the owner, literally, of an empire of land and farms. And he wants to immortalize that power, he wants to hand it on, because he's dying. The son has a much finer appreciation of justice and human relations than the father. The father is rougher, more Philistine; he's cruder, and when we speak of the fineness of emotions, we would probably say the son has them and the father lacks them. When I saw the play I thought, this is going to be simply marvelous because the person with the sensitivity will be presented with power and what is he going to do about it? But it never gets to that. It gets deflected onto a question of personal neurosis. It comes to a dead end. If we're talking about tragedy, the Greeks would have done something miraculous with that idea. They would have stuck the son with the power, and faced him with the wracking conflicts of the sensitive man having to rule. And then you would throw light on what the tragedy of power is.

INTERVIEWER

Which is what you were getting at in *Incident at Vichy*...

MILLER

That's exactly what I was after. But I feel today's stage turns away from any consideration of power, which always lies at the heart of tragedy. I use Williams' play as an example because he's that excellent that his problems are symptomatic of the time—*Cat* ultimately came down to the mendacity of human relations. It was a most accurate personalization but it bypasses the issue which the play seems to me to raise, namely the mendacity, in social relations. I still believe that when a play questions, even threatens, our social arrangement, that is when it really shakes us profoundly and dangerously, and that is when you've got to be great; good isn't enough.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you think that people in general now rationalize so, and have so many euphemisms for death, that they can't face tragedy?

MILLER

I wonder whether there isn't a certain—I'm speaking now of all classes of people—you could call it a softness, or else a genuine inability to face the tough decisions and the dreadful results of error. I say that only because when *Death of a Salesman* went on again recently, I sensed in some of the reaction that it was simply too threatening. Now there were probably a lot of people in the Forties, when it first opened, who felt the same way. Maybe I just didn't hear those people as much as I heard other people—maybe it has to do with my own reaction. You need a certain amount of confidence to watch tragedy. If you yourself are about to die, you're not going to see that play. I've always thought that the Americans had, almost inborn, a primordial fear of falling, being declassed—you get it with your driver's license, if not earlier.

INTERVIEWER

What about Europeans?

MILLER

Well, the play opened in Paris again only last September; it opened in Paris ten years earlier, too, with very little effect. It wasn't a very good production, I understand. But now suddenly they discovered this play. And I sensed that their reaction was quite an American reaction. Maybe it comes with having—having the guilt of wealth; it would be interesting if the Russians ever got to feel that way!

INTERVIEWER

Death of a Salesman has been done in Russia, hasn't it?

MILLER

Oh, many times.

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INTERVIEWER

When you were in Russia recently did you form any opinion about the Russian theater public?

MILLER

First of all, there's a wonderful naïveté that they have; they're not bored to death. They're not coming in out of the rain, so to speak, with nothing better to do. When they go to the theater, it has great weight with them. They come to see something that'll change their lives. Ninety percent of the time, of course, there's nothing there, but they're open to a grand experience. This is not the way we go to the theater.

INTERVIEWER

What about the plays themselves?

MILLER

I think they do things on the stage which are exciting and deft and they have marvelous actors, but the drama itself is not adventurous. The plays are basically a species of naturalism; it's not even realism. They're violently opposed to the theater of the absurd because they see it as a fragmenting of the community into perverse individuals who will no longer be under any mutual obligation at all, and I can see some point in their fear. Of course, these things should be done if only so one can rebut them. I know that I was very moved in many ways by German expressionism when I was in school: yet there too something was perverse in it to me. It was the end of man, there are no people in it any more; that was especially true of the real German stuff: it's the bitter end of the world where man is a voice of his class function, and that's it. Brecht has a lot of that in him, but he's too much of a poet to be enslaved by it. And yet, at the same time, I learned a great deal from it. I used elements of it that were fused into *Death of a Salesman*. For instance, I purposefully would not give Ben any character, because for Willy he *has* no character—which is, psychologically, expressionist because so many memories come back with a simple tag on them: somebody represents a threat to you, or a promise.

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INTERVIEWER

Speaking of different cultures, what is your feeling about the French Théâtre National Populaire?

MILLER

I thought a play I saw by Corneille, *L'Allusion Comique*, one of the most exciting things I've ever seen. We saw something I never thought I could enjoy—my French is not all that good. But I had just gotten over being sick, and we were about to leave France, and I wanted to see what they did with it. It was just superb. It is one of Corneille's lesser works, about a magician who takes people into the nether regions. What a marvelous mixture of satire, and broad comedy, and characterizations! And the acting was simply out of this world. Of course one of the best parts about the whole thing was the audience. Because they're mostly under 30, it looked to me; they pay very little to get in; and I would guess there are between 2500 and 3000 seats in that place. And the vitality of the audience is breathtaking. Of course the actors' ability to speak that language so beautifully is just in itself a joy. From that vast stage, to talk quietly, and make you *feel* the voice just wafting all over the house...

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think we haven't been able to do such a thing here? Why has Whitehead's Lincoln Center Repertory Theater failed as such?

MILLER

Well, that is a phenomenon worthy of a sociological study. When I got into it, *After the Fall* was about two-thirds written. Whitehead came to me and said, "I hear you're writing a play. Can we use it to start the Lincoln Center Repertory Company?" For one reason or another I said I would do it. I expected to take a financial beating (I could hope to earn maybe twenty percent of what I normally earn with a play, but I assumed that people would say, "Well, it's a stupid but not idiotic action.") What developed, before any play

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opened at all, was a hostility which completely dumbfounded me. I don't think it was directed against anybody in particular. For actors who want to develop their art, there's no better place to do it than in a permanent repertory company where you play different parts and you have opportunities you've never had in a lifetime on Broadway. But the actors seemed to be affronted by the whole thing. I couldn't dig it! I could understand the enmity of commercial producers who, after all, thought they were threatened by it. But the professional people of every kind greeted it as though it were some kind of an insult. The only conclusion I can come to is that an actor was now threatened with having to put up or shut up. He had always been able to walk around on Broadway where conditions were dreadful and say, "I'm a great actor but I'm unappreciated," but in the back of his mind he could figure, "Well, one of these days I'll get a starring role and I'll go to Hollywood and get rich." This he couldn't do in a repertory theater where he signed up for several years. So the whole idea of that kind of quick success was renounced. He didn't want to face an opportunity which threatened him in this way. It makes me wonder whether there is such a profound alienation among artists that any organized attempt to create something that is not based upon commerce, that has sponsorship, automatically sets people against it. I think that's an interesting facet. I also spoke to a group of young playwrights. Now, if it had been me, I would have been knocking at the door, demanding that they read my play, as I did unsuccessfully when the Group Theatre was around. Then every playwright was banging on the door and furious and wanted the art theater to do what *he* thought they should do. We could do that because it belonged to us all—you know—we thought of the Group Theatre as a public enterprise. Well, that wasn't true at all here. Everyone thought the Lincoln Theatre was the property of the directors, of Miller and Whitehead and Kazan and one or two other people. Of course, what also made it fail was, as Lawrence Olivier suggested, that it takes years to do anything. But he also made the point that with his English repertory theater he got encouragement

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from the beginning. There were people who pooh-poohed the whole thing, and said it was ridiculous, but basically the artistic community was in favor of it.

INTERVIEWER

How about the actors themselves? Did Lee Strasberg influence them?

MILLER

I think Strasberg is a symptom, really. He's a great force, and (in my unique opinion, evidently) a force which is not for the good in the theater. He makes actors secret people and he makes acting secret, and it's the most communicative art known to man; I mean, that's what the actor's *supposed* to be doing. But I wouldn't blame the Repertory Theater failures on him, because the people in there were not Actors Studio people at all; so he is not responsible for that. But the Method is in the air: the actor is defending himself from the Philistine, vulgar public. I had a girl in my play I couldn't hear, and the acoustics in that little theater we were using were simply magnificent. I said to her, "I can't hear you," and I kept on saying, "I can't hear you." She finally got furious and said to me, in effect, that she was acting the truth, and that she was not going to prostitute herself to the audience. That was the living end! It reminded me of Walter Hampden's comment —because we had a similar problem in *The Crucible* with some actors—he said they play a cello with the most perfect bowing and the fingering is magnificent but there are no strings on the instrument. The problem is that the actor is now working out his private fate through his role, and the idea of communicating the meaning of the play is the last thing that occurs to him. In the Actors Studio, despite denials, the actor is told that the text is really the framework for his emotions; I've heard actors change the order of lines in my work and tell me that the lines are only, so to speak, the libretto for the music—that the actor is the main force that the audience is watching and that the playwright is his servant. They are told that the analysis of the text, and the

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rhythm of the text, the verbal texture, is of no importance whatever. This is Method, as they are teaching it, which is, of course, a perversion of it, if you go back to the beginning. But there was always a tendency in that direction. Chekhov, himself, said that Stanislavsky had perverted *The Seagull.*

INTERVIEWER

What about Method acting in the movies?

MILLER

Well, in the movies, curiously enough, the Method works better. Because the camera can come right up to an actor's nostrils and suck out of him a communicative gesture; a look in the eye, a wrinkle of his grin, and so on, which registers nothing on the stage. The stage is, after all, a verbal medium. You've got to make large gestures if they're going to be seen at all. In other words, you've got to be unnatural. You've got to say, "I am out to move into that audience; that's my job." In a movie you don't do that; as a matter of fact, that's bad movie-acting, it's overacting. Movies are wonderful for private acting.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the movies helped bring about this private acting in the theater?

MILLER

Well, it's a perversion of the Chekhovian play and of the Stanislavsky technique. What Chekhov was doing was eliminating the histrionics of his actors by incorporating them in the writing: the internal life was what he was writing about. And Stanislavsky's direction was also internal: for the first time he was trying to motivate every move from within instead of imitating an action; which is what acting should be. When you eliminate the vital element of the actor in the community and simply make a psychiatric figure on the stage who is thinking profound thoughts which he doesn't let anyone know about, then it's a perversion.

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INTERVIEWER

How does the success of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* play fit into this?

MILLER

Well, I would emphasize its production and direction. Peter Brook has been trying for years, especially through productions of Shakespeare, to make the bridge between psychological acting and theater, between the private personality, perhaps, and its public demonstration. *Marat/Sade* is more an oratorio than a play; the characters are basically thematic relationships rather than human entities, so the action exemplified rather than characterized.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the popularity of the movies has had any influence on playwrighting itself?

MILLER

Yes. Its form has been changed by the movies. I think certain techniques, such as the jumping from place to place, although it's as old as Shakespeare, came to us not through Shakespeare, but through the movies, a telegraphic, dream-constructed way of seeing life.

INTERVIEWER

How important is the screenwriter in motion pictures?

MILLER

Well, you'd be hard put to remember the dialogue in some of the great pictures that you've seen. That's why pictures are so international. You don't have to hear the style of the dialogue in an Italian movie or a French movie. We're watching the film so that the vehicle is not the ear or the word, it's the eye. The director of a play is nailed to words. He can interpret them a little differently, but he has limits: you can only inflect a sentence in two or three different ways, but you can inflect an image on the screen in an infinite number of ways. You can

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make one character practically fall out of the frame; you can shoot it where you don't even see his face. Two people can be talking, and the man talking cannot be seen, so the emphasis is on the reaction to the speech rather than on the speech itself.

INTERVIEWER

What about television as a medium for drama?

MILLER

I don't think there is anything that approaches the theater. The sheer presence of a living person is always stronger than his image. But there's no reason why TV shouldn't be a terrific medium. The problem is that the audience watching TV shows is always separated. My feeling is that people in a group, *en masse*, watching something, react differently, and perhaps more profoundly, than they do when they're alone in their living rooms. Yet it's not a hurdle that couldn't be jumped by the right kind of material. Simply, it's hard to get good movies, it's hard to get good novels, it's hard to get good poetry—it's *impossible* to get good television because in addition to the indigenous difficulties there's the whole question of it being a medium that's controlled by big business. It took TV seventeen years to do *Death of a Salesman* here. It's been done on TV in every country in the world at least once, but it's critical of the business world and the content is downbeat.

INTERVIEWER

A long time ago, you used to write radio scripts. Did you learn much about technique from that experience?

MILLER

I did. We had twenty-eight and a half minutes to tell a whole story in a radio play and you had to concentrate on the words because you couldn't see anything. You were playing in a dark closet, in fact. So the economy of words in a good radio play was everything. It drove you more and more to realize what the power of a good sentence was, and the right phrase could save you a page you would otherwise be

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wasting. I was always sorry radio didn't last long enough for contemporary poetic movements to take advantage of it, because it's a natural medium for poets. It's pure voice, pure words. Words and silence; a marvelous medium. I've often thought, even recently, that I would like to write another radio play, and just give it to someone and let them do it on WBAI. The English do radio plays still, very good ones.

INTERVIEWER

You used to write verse drama too, didn't you?

MILLER

Oh yes, I was up to my neck in it.

INTERVIEWER

Would you ever do it again?

MILLER

I might. I often write speeches in verse, and then break them down. Much of *Death of a Salesman* was originally written in verse, and *The Crucible* was all written in verse, but I broke it up. I was frightened that the actors would take an attitude toward the material that would destroy its vitality. I didn't want anyone standing up there making speeches. You see, we have no tradition of verse, and as soon as an American actor sees something printed like verse, he immediately puts one foot in front of the other—or else he mutters. Then you can't hear it at all.

INTERVIEWER

Which of your own plays do you feel closest to now?

MILLER

I don't know if I feel closer to one than another. I suppose *The Crucible* in some ways. I think there's a lot of myself in it. There are a lot of layers in there that I know about that nobody else does...

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INTERVIEWER

More so than in *After the Fall*...?

MILLER

Yes, because although *After the Fall* is more psychological it's less developed as an artifice. You see, in *The Crucible* I was completely freed by the period I was writing about—over three centuries ago. It was a different diction, a different age. I had great joy writing that, more than with almost any other play I've written. I learned about how writers felt in the past when they were dealing almost constantly with historical material. A dramatist writing history could finish a play Monday and start another Wednesday, and go right on. Because the *stories* are all prepared for him. Inventing the story is what takes all the time. It takes a year to invent the story. The historical dramatist doesn't have to invent anything, except his language, and his characterizations. Oh, of course, there's the terrific problem of condensing history, a lot of reshuffling and bringing in characters who never lived, or who died a hundred years apart—but basically if you've got the story, you're a year ahead.

INTERVIEWER

It must also be tempting to use a historical figure whose epoch was one of faith.

MILLER

It is. With all the modern psychology and psychiatry and the level of literacy higher that it ever was, we get less perspective on ourselves than at almost any time I know about. I have never been so aware of clique ideas overtaking people—fashions, for example—and sweeping them away, as though the last day of the world had come. One can sometimes point to a week or month in which things changed abruptly. It's like women's clothing in a certain issue of *Vogue* magazine. There is such a wish to be part of that enormous minority that likes to create new minorities. Yet people are desperately afraid of being alone.

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INTERVIEWER

Has our insight into psychology affected this?

MILLER

It has simply helped people rationalize their situation, rather than get out of it, or break through it. In other words—you've heard it a hundred times—"Well, I am this type of person, and this type doesn't do anything but what I'm doing..."

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the push toward personal success dominates American life now more than it used to?

MILLER

I think it's far more powerful today than when I wrote *Death of a Salesman*. I think it's closer to a madness today than it was then. Now there's no perspective on it at all.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that the girl in *After the Fall* is a symbol of that obsession?

MILLER

Yes, she is consumed by what she does, and instead of it being a means of release, it's a jail. A prison which defines her, finally. She can't break through. In other words, success, instead of giving freedom of choice, becomes a way of life. There's no country I've been to where people, when you come into a room and sit down with them, so often ask you, "What do you do?" And, being American, many's the time I've almost asked that question, then realized it's good for my soul not to know. For a while! Just to let the evening wear on and see what I think of this person without knowing what he does and how successful he is, or what a failure. We're *ranking* everybody every minute of the day.

INTERVIEWER

Will you write about American success again?

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MILLER

I might, but you see, as a thing in itself success is self-satirizing; it's self-elucidating, in a way. That's why it's so difficult to write about. Because the very people who are being swallowed up by this ethos nod in agreement when you tell them, "You are being swallowed up by this thing." To really wrench them and find them another feasible perspective is therefore extremely difficult.

INTERVIEWER

In your story "The Prophecy," the protagonist says this is a time of the supremacy of personal relations, that there are no larger aims in our lives. Is this your view too?

MILLER

Well, that story was written under the pall of the Fifties, but I think there's been a terrific politicalization of the people these past four or five years. Not in the old sense, but in the sense that it is no longer *gauche* or stupid to be interested in the fate of society and in injustice and in race problems and the rest of it. It now becomes esthetic material once again. In the Fifties it was *out* to mention this. It meant you were really not an artist. That prejudice seems to have gone. The Negroes broke it up, thank God! But it has been an era of personal relations—and now it's being synthesized in a good way. That is, the closer you get to any kind of political action among young people, the more they demand that the action have a certain fidelity to human nature, and that pomposity, and posing, and role-taking not be allowed to strip the movement of its veracity. What they suspect most is gesturing, you know, just making gestures, which are either futile, or self-serving, or merely conscientious. The intense personal-relations concentration of the Fifties seems now to have been joined to a political consciousness, which is terrific.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel politics in any way to be an invasion of your privacy?

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MILLER

No, I always drew a lot of inspiration from politics, from one or another kind of national struggle. You live in the world even though you only vote once in a while. It determines the extensions of your personality. I lived through the McCarthy time, when one saw personalities shifting and changing before one's eyes, as a direct, obvious result of a political situation. And had it gone on, we would have gotten a whole new American personality—which in part we have. It's ten years since McCarthy died, and it's only now that powerful Senators dare to suggest that it might be wise to learn a little Chinese, to talk to some Chinese. I mean it took ten years, and even those guys who are thought to be quite brave and courageous just now dare to make these suggestions. Such a pall of fright was laid upon us that it truly deflected the American mind. It's part of a paranoia which we haven't escaped yet. Good God, people still give their lives for it; look what we're doing in the Pacific.

INTERVIEWER

Yet so much of the theater these last few years has had nothing to do with public life.

MILLER

Yes, it's got so we've lost the technique of grappling with the world that Homer had, that Aeschylus had, that Euripides had. And Shakespeare. How amazing it is that people who adore the Greek drama fail to see that these great works are works of a man confronting his society, the illusions of the society, the faiths of the society. They're social documents, not little piddling private conversations. We just got educated into thinking this is all "a story," a myth for its own sake.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think there'll be a return to social drama now?

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MILLER

I think there will be, if theater is to survive. Look at Molière. You can't conceive of him except as a social playwright. He's a social critic. Bathes up to his neck in what's going on around him.

INTERVIEWER

Could the strict forms utilized by Molière appear again?

MILLER

I don't think one can repeat old forms as such, because they express most densely a moment of time. For example I couldn't write a play like *Death of a Salesman* any more. I couldn't really write any of my plays now. Each is different, spaced sometimes two years apart, because each moment called for a different vocabulary and a different organization of the material. However, when you speak of a strict form, I believe in it for the theater. Otherwise you end up with anecdotes, not with plays. We're in an era of anecdotes, in my opinion, which is going to pass any minute. The audience has been trained to eschew the organized climax because it's corny, or because it violates the chaos which we all revere. But I think that's going to disappear with the first play of a new kind which will once again pound the boards and shake people out of their seats with a deeply, intensely, organized climax. It can only come from a strict form: you can't get it except as the culmination of two hours of development. You can't get it by raising your voice and yelling, suddenly—because it's getting time to get on the train for Yonkers.

INTERVIEWER

Have you any conception of what your own evolution has been? In terms of form and themes?

MILLER

I keep going. Both forwards and backwards. Hopefully more forwards than backwards. That is to say, before I wrote my first *successful* play, I wrote, oh I don't know, may-

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be fourteen or fifteen other full-length plays and maybe thirty radio plays. The majority of them were non-realistic plays. They were metaphorical plays, or symbolistic plays; some of them were in verse, or in one case—writing about Montezuma—I turned out a grand historical tragedy, partly in verse, rather Elizabethan in form. Then I began to be known really by virtue of the single play I had ever tried to do in completely realistic Ibsen-like form, which was *All My Sons*. The fortunes of a writer! The others, like *Salesman*, which are a compound of expressionism and realism, or even *A View From the Bridge*, which is realism of a sort (though it's broken up severely), are more typical of the bulk of the work I've done. *After the Fall* is really down the middle, it's more like most of the work I've done than any other play... excepting that what has *surfaced* has been more realistic than in the others. It's really an impressionistic kind of a work. I was trying to create a total by throwing many small pieces at the spectator.

INTERVIEWER

What production of *After the Fall* do you think did it the most justice?

MILLER

I saw one production which I thought was quite marvelous. That was the one Zefferelli did in Italy. He understood that this was a play which reflected the world as one man saw it. Through the play the mounting awareness of this man was the issue, and as it approached agony the audience was to be enlarged in its consciousness of what was happening. The other productions that I've seen have all been really *realistic* in the worst sense. That is to say, they simply played the scenes without any attempt to allow the main character to develop this widened awareness. He has different reactions on page ten than he does on page one, but it takes an actor with a certain amount of brains to see that evolution. It isn't enough to feel them. And as a director Zefferelli had an absolutely organic viewpoint toward it. The play is about someone desperately striving to obtain a viewpoint.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you feel in the New York production that the girl allegedly based on Marilyn Monroe was out of proportion, entirely separate from Quentin?

MILLER

Yes, although I failed to foresee it myself. In the Italian production this never happened; it was always in proportion. I suppose, too, that by the time Zefferelli did the play the publicity shock had been absorbed, so that one could watch Quentin's evolution without being distracted.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think happened in New York?

MILLER

Something I never thought could happen. The play was never judged as a play at all. Good or bad, I would never know what it was from what I read about it, only what it was supposed to have been.

INTERVIEWER

Because they all reacted as if it were simply a segment of your personal life?

MILLER

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think contemporary American critics tend to regard the theater in terms of literature rather than theater?

MILLER

Yes, for years theatrical criticism was carried on mainly by reporters. Reporters who by and large had no references in the esthetic theories of the drama, except in the most rudimentary way. And off in a corner, somewhere, the professors, with no relation whatsoever to the newspaper critics, were

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regarding the drama from a so-called academic viewpoint. With its relentless standards of tragedy, and so forth. What the reporters had very often was a simple, primitive love of a good show. And if nothing else, you could tell whether that level of mind was genuinely interested, or not. There was a certain naïveté in the reportage. They could destroy plays which dealt on a level of sensibility that was beyond them. But by and large you got a playback on what you put in. They knew how to laugh, cry, at least a native kind of reaction, stamp their feet—they loved the theater. Since then, the reporter-critics have been largely displaced by academic critics or graduates of that school. Quite frankly, two-thirds of the time I don't know what they really feel about the play. They seem to feel that the theater is an intrusion on literature. The theater as theater—as a place where people go to be swept up in some new experience—seems to antagonize them. I don't think we can really do away with *joy*: the joy of being distracted altogether in the service of some esthetic. That seems to be the general drift, but it won't work: sooner or later the theater outwits everybody. Someone comes in who just loves to write, or to act, and who'll sweep the audience, and the critics, with him.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think these critics influence playwrights?

MILLER

Everything influences playwrights. A playwright who isn't influenced is never of any use. He's the litmus paper of the arts. He's got to be, because if he isn't working on the same wave length as the audience, no one would know what in hell he was talking about. He is a kind of psychic journalist, even when he's great; consequently, for him the total atmosphere is more important in this art than it is probably in any other.

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INTERVIEWER

What do you think of a certain critic's statement that the success of a really contemporary play, like *Marat/Sade*, makes Tennessee Williams and his genre obsolete?

MILLER

Ridiculous. No more than that Tennessee's remarkable success made obsolete the past before him. There are some biological laws in the theater which can't be violated. It should not be made into an activated chess game. You can't have a theater based upon anything other than a mass audience if it's going to succeed. The larger the better. It's the law of the theater. In the Greek audience fourteen thousand people sat down at the same time, to see a play. Fourteen thousand people! And nobody can tell me that those people were all readers of *The New York Review of Books*! Even Shakespeare was smashed around in his time by university people. I think for much the same reasons—because he was reaching for those parts of man's makeup which respond to melodrama, broad comedy, violence, dirty words, and blood. Plenty of blood, murder, and not very well motivated at that.

INTERVIEWER

What is your feeling about Eugene O'Neill as a playwright?

MILLER

O'Neill never meant much to me when I was starting. In the Thirties, and for the most part in the Forties, you would have said that he was a finished figure. He was not a force any more. *The Iceman Cometh* and *The Long Day's Journey into Night*, so popular a few years ago, would not have been successful when they were written. Which is another example of the psychic journalism of the stage. A great deal depends upon when a play is produced. That's why playwrighting is such a fatal profession to take up. You can have everything, but if you don't have that sense of timing, nothing happens. One thing I always respected about O'Neill was his insistence on

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his vision. That is, even when he was twisting materials to distortion and really ruining his work, there was an image behind it of a possessed individual, who, for good or ill, was himself. I don't think there is anything in it for a young man to learn technically; that was probably why I wasn't interested in it. He had one virtue which is not technical, it's what I call "drumming;" he repeats something up to and past the point where you say "I know this, I've heard this ninety-three different ways," and suddenly you realize you are being swept up in something that you thought you understood and he has drummed you over the horizon into a new perception. He doesn't care if he's repeating. It's part of his insensitivity. He's a very insensitive writer. There's no finesse at all: he's the Dreiser of the stage. He writes with heavy pencils. His virtue is that he insists on his climax, and not the one you would want to put there. His failing is that so many of his plays are so distorted that one no longer knows on what level to receive them. His people are not symbolic; his lines are certainly not verse; the prose is not realistic—his is the never-never land of a quasi-Strindberg writer. But where he's wonderful, it's superb. The last play is really a masterpiece. But, to give you an example of timing: *The Iceman Cometh* opened, it happened, the same year that *All My Sons* opened. It's an interesting sociological phenomenon. That was in forty-seven, soon after the war. There was still in the air a certain hopefulness about the organization of the world. There was no depression in the United States. McCarthyism had not yet started. There was a kind of... one could almost speak of it as an atmosphere of good will, if such a term can be used in the twentieth century. Then a play comes along which posits a world *really* filled with disasters of one kind or another. A *cul de sac* is described, a bag with no way out. At that time it didn't corroborate what people had experienced. It corroborated what they were *going* to experience, and pretty soon after, it became very timely. We moved into the bag that he had gotten into first! But at the time it opened, nobody went to see *Iceman*. In a big way, nobody went. Even after it was cut, the thing took four or five hours to play.

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The production was simply dreadful. But nobody made any note that it was dreadful. Nobody perceived what this play was. It was described simply as the work of a sick old man of whom everybody said, "Isn't it wonderful that he can still spell?" When I went to see that play not long after it opened, there must have been thirty people in the audience. I think there were a dozen people left by the end of the play. It was quite obviously a great piece of work which was being mangled on the stage. It was obvious to me. And to a certain number of directors who saw it. Not all of them. Not all directors can tell the difference between the production and the play. I can't do it all the time, either, though *Iceman* was one where I could. But as for the critics I don't think there is anybody alive today, with the possible exception of Harold Clurman, who I would trust to know the difference between production and play. Harold can do it—not always, but a lot of the time—because he has directed a good deal.

INTERVIEWER

Could this question of timing have affected the reaction here to *After the Fall*?

MILLER

Look, *After the Fall* would have been altogether different if by some means the hero was killed, or shot himself. Then we would have been in business. I knew it at the time. As I was saying before... there's nothing like death. Still, I just wasn't going to do it. The ironical thing to me was that I heard cries of indignation from various people, who had in the lifetime of Marilyn Monroe either exploited her unmercifully, in a way that would have subjected them to peonage laws, or mocked her viciously, or refused to take any of her pretensions seriously. So consequently, it was impossible to credit their sincerity.

INTERVIEWER

They were letting you get them off the hook.

MILLER

That's right. That's exactly right.

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INTERVIEWER

And they didn't want Quentin to compromise...

MILLER

I think Günter Grass recently has said that art is uncompromising and life is full of compromises. To bring them together is a near-impossibility, and that is what I was trying to do. I was trying to make it as much like life as it could possibly be and as excruciating—so the relief that we want would not be there: I denied the audience the relief. And of course all these hard realists betrayed their basic romanticism by their reaction.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think if you had done it in poetry that would have removed the threat more?

MILLER

Yes, I suppose so. But I didn't want to remove it. It would have seduced people in a way I didn't want to. Look, I know how to make 'em go with me... it's the first instinct of a writer who succeeds in the theater at all. I mean by the time you've written your third play or so you know which buttons to push; if you want an easy success there's no problem that way once you've gotten a story. People are pretty primitive—they really want the thing to turn out all right. After all, for a century and half *King Lear* was played in England with a happy ending. I wrote a radio play about the boy who wrote that version—William Ireland—who forged Shakespeare's plays, and edited *King Lear* so that it conformed to a middle-class view of life. They thought, including all but Malone, who was the first good critic, that this was the real Shakespeare. He was an expert forger. He fixed up several of the other plays, but this one he really rewrote. He was seventeen years old. And they produced it—it was a big success—and Boswell thought it was the greatest thing he'd ever seen, and so did all the others. The only one was Malone, who on the basis of textual impossibilities—aside from the fact that he sensed it was a bowdlerization—proved that it couldn't have been

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Shakespeare. It's what I was talking about before: the litmus paper of the playwright: you see Ireland sensed quite correctly what these people really wanted from *King Lear*, and he gave it to them. He sentimentalized it; took out any noxious references.

INTERVIEWER

And did it end with a happy family reunion?

MILLER

Yes, kind of like a Jewish melodrama. A family play.

INTERVIEWER

To go back to *After the Fall*. Did the style in which this play was presented in New York affect its reception?

MILLER

Well, you've hit it right on the head. You see, what happened in Italy with Zefferelli was—I can describe it very simply: there was a stage made up of steel frames; it is as though one were looking into the back of a bellows camera—you know, concentric oblong steel frames receding toward a center. The sides of these steel frames were covered, just like a camera is, but the actors could enter through openings in these covers. They could appear or disappear on the stage at any depth. Furthermore, pneumatic lifts silently and invisibly raised the actors up, so that they could appear for ten seconds—then disappear. Or a table would be raised or a whole group of furniture, which the actors would then use. So that the whole image of all this happening inside a man's head was there from the first second, and remained right through the play. In New York the difficulty was partly due to the stage which was open, rounded. Such a stage has virtues for certain kinds of plays, but it is stiff—there is no place to hide at all. If an actor has to *appear* stage center, he makes his appearance twenty feet off the left or right. The laborious nature of these entrances and exits is insuperable. What is supposed to "appear" doesn't appear, but lumbers on stage toward you.

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INTERVIEWER

Did that Italian production have a concentration camp in the background? I remember a piece by Jonathan Miller complaining of your use of the concentration camp in New York.

MILLER

Oh yes. You see in Italy the steel frame itself *became* the concentration camp, so that the whole play in effect was taking place in the ambiance of that enclosure. This steel turned into a jail, into a prison, into a camp, into a constricted mechanical environment. You could light those girders in such a way that they were forbidding—it was a great scenic idea.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you choose to use a concentration camp in the first place?

MILLER

Well, I have always felt that concentration camps, though they're a phenomenon of totalitarian states, are also the logical conclusion of contemporary life. If you complain of people being shot down in the streets, of the absence of communication or social responsibility, of the rise of everyday violence which people have become accustomed to, and the dehumanization of feelings, then the ultimate development on an organized social level is the concentration camp. Camps didn't happen in Africa where people had no connection with the basic development of western civilization. They happened in the heart of Europe, in a country, for example, which was probably less anti-Semitic than other countries, like France. The Dreyfus case did not happen in Germany. In this play the question is, what is there between people that is indestructible? The concentration camp is the final expression of human separateness and its ultimate consequence. It is organized abandonment... one of the prime themes of *After The Fall*.

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Even in *Salesman* what's driving Willy nuts is that he's trying to establish a connection, in his case, with the world of power; he is trying to say that if you behave in a certain way, you'll end up in the cat-bird seat. That's your connection; then life is no longer dangerous, you see. You are safe from abandonment.

INTERVIEWER

What is the genesis of *The Crucible*?

MILLER

I thought of it first when I was at Michigan. I read a lot about the Salem witch trials at that time. Then when the McCarthy era came along, I remembered these stories and I used to tell them to people when it started. I had no idea that it was going to go as far as it went. I used to say, you know, McCarthy is actually saying certain lines that I recall the witch-hunters saying in Salem. So I started to go back, not with the idea of writing a play, but to refresh my own mind because it was getting eerie. For example, his holding up his hand with cards in it, saying, "I have in my hand the names of so-and-so." Well, this was a standard tactic of seventeenth-century prosecutors confronting a witness who was reluctant or confused, or an audience in a church which was not quite convinced that this particular individual might be guilty. He wouldn't say, "I have in my hand a list...," he'd say, "We possess the names of all these people who are guilty. But the time has not come yet to release them." He had nothing at all—he simply wanted to secure in the town's mind the idea that he saw everything, that everyone was transparent to him. It was a way of inflicting guilt on everybody, and many people responded genuinely out of guilt; some would come and tell him some fantasy, or something that they had done or thought that was evil in their minds. I had in my play, for example, the old man who comes and reports that when his wife reads certain books, *he* can't pray. He figures that the prosecutors would know the reason, that they can see through what to him was an opaque glass. Of course, he ends up in a

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disaster because they prosecuted his wife. Many times completely naïve testimony resulted in somebody being hanged. And it was because they originally said, "We really know what's going on."

INTERVIEWER

Was it the play, *The Crucible* itself, do you think, or was it perhaps that piece you did in *The Nation*—"A Modest Proposal" —that focused the Un-American Activities Committee on you?

MILLER

Well, I had made a lot of statements and I had signed a great many petitions. I'd been involved in organizations, you know, putting my name down for 15 years before that. But I don't think they ever would have bothered me if I hadn't married Marilyn. Had they been interested they would have called me earlier. And in fact I was told on good authority that the then Chairman, Francis Walter, said that if Marilyn would take a photograph with him, shaking his hand, he would call off the whole thing. It's as simple as that. Marilyn would get them on the front pages right away. They had been on the front page for years, but the issue was starting to lose its punch. They ended up in the back of the paper or on the inside pages, and here they would get right up front again. These men would time hearings to meet a certain day's newspaper. In other words, if they figured the astronauts were going up, let's say, they wouldn't have a hearing that week; they'd wait until they'd returned and things had quieted down.

INTERVIEWER

What happened at the committee hearing?

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MILLER

Well, I was indicted for contempt for having refused to give or confirm the name of a writer, whether I had seen him in a meeting of Communist writers I had attended some eight or ten years earlier. My legal defense was not on any of the Constitutional Amendments but on the contention that Congress couldn't drag people in and question them about anything on the Congressman's mind; they had to show that the witness was likely to have information relevant to some legislation then at issue. The Committee had put on a show of interest in passport legislation. I had been denied a passport a couple of years earlier. Ergo, I fitted into their vise. A year later I was convicted after a week's trial. Then about a year after that the Court of Appeals threw out the whole thing. A short while later the Committee's Chief Counsel, who had been my interrogator, was shown to be on the payroll of a racist foundation and was retired to private life. It was all a dreadful waste of time and money and anger, but I suffered very little, really, compared to others who were driven out of their professions and never got back, or who did get back after eight and ten years of blacklisting. I wasn't in TV or movies so I could still function.

INTERVIEWER

Have your political views changed much since then?

MILLER

Nowadays I'm certainly not ready to advocate a tightly organized planned economy. I think it has its virtues, but I'm in deadly fear of people with too much power. I don't trust people that much anymore. I used to think that if people had the right idea they could make things move accordingly. Now it's a day to day fight to stop dreadful things from happening. In the Thirties it was, for me, inconceivable that a socialist government could be really anti-Semitic. It just could

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not happen because their whole protest in the beginning was against anti-Semitism, against racism, against this kind of inhumanity; that's why I was drawn to it. It was accounted to Hitler; it was accounted to blind capitalism. I'm much more pragmatic about such things now, and I want to know those I'm against and who it is that I'm backing and what he is like.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel whatever Jewish tradition you were brought up in has influenced you at all?

MILLER

I never used to, but I think now that while I hadn't taken over an ideology I did absorb a certain viewpoint. That there is tragedy in the world but that the world must continue: one is a condition for the other. Jews can't afford to revel too much in the tragic because it might overwhelm them. Consequently, in most Jewish writing there's always the caution, "Don't push it too far toward the abyss, because you're liable to fall in." I think it's part of that psychology and it's part of me, too. I have, so to speak, a psychic investment in the continuity of life. I couldn't ever write a totally nihilistic work.

INTERVIEWER

Would you care to say anything about what you're working on now?

MILLER

I'd better not. I do have about five things started—short stories, a screen play, etc. I'm in the process of collecting my short stories. But I tell myself, "What am I doing." I should be doing a play. I have a calendar in my head. You see, the theater season starts in September, and I have always written

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plays in the summertime. Almost always—I did write *View From the Bridge* in the winter. So, quite frankly, I can't say. I have some interesting beginnings but I can't see the end of any of them. It's usually that way, I plan something for weeks or months and suddenly begin writing dialogue which begins in relation to what I had planned and veers off into something I hadn't even thought about. I'm drawing down the lightning, I suppose. Somewhere in the blood you have a play, and you wait until it passes behind the eyes. I'm further along than that, but I'd rather leave it at that for now.

—OLGA CARLISLE
—ROSE STYRON

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THE POWER PLANT SESTINA

BY KENWARD ELMSLIE & JOE BRAINARD

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HORIZON, BURN WITH A SMOKY FLAME.
THOUSANDS OF WOMEN WILL BOB UP
AND DOWN
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT; AND RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT.
GIVE ME SOMETHING PEARL-SHAPED
AND SOFT
(LIKE BLUE CRYSTALS) TO OFFSET HARD
WORK,
AND DON'T FORBID AMBER
AT THE CENTER.

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AT THE CENTER, FOSSILS FLAME, AND RESINS WORK
LIKE JUNGLE RAFTS MOVING DOWN EVIL-SMELLING, RAPIDS SO SOFT THE RUBBERY LEAVES ABOVE LOOK "RIGHT."

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TO FEEL LIKE DOWN,
WARM DOWN
ON CHEEKS THAT NEVER
WORK.

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WORK, WORK. A WORLD OF WORK!
DAHLIAS! ZINNIAS! GIVE US THIS RIGHT!
"DETENTION" ADDICTS, WE BEND DOWN
AND SEARCH FOR THE CENTER,
THE GLASSED-IN FLAME
THAT SIFTS TOUGH FROM SOFT.

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TERROR MAKES US SOFT:
SEE HOW EARTHQUAKES WORK.
THE EXAMPLE OF FLAME
GIVES US THE RIGHT
TO CHOOSE THE EDGE AND ABANDON
THE CENTER.
WATCH IT HURTLE DOWN!

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THROUGH A SMOKY SKY, IT'LL HURTLE DOWN.
INSTEAD, SOMETHING PEARL-SHAPED AND SOFT
WILL RECONNOITER AROUND THE VANISHED CENTER:
BLUE CRYSTALS TO OFFSET HARD WORK.

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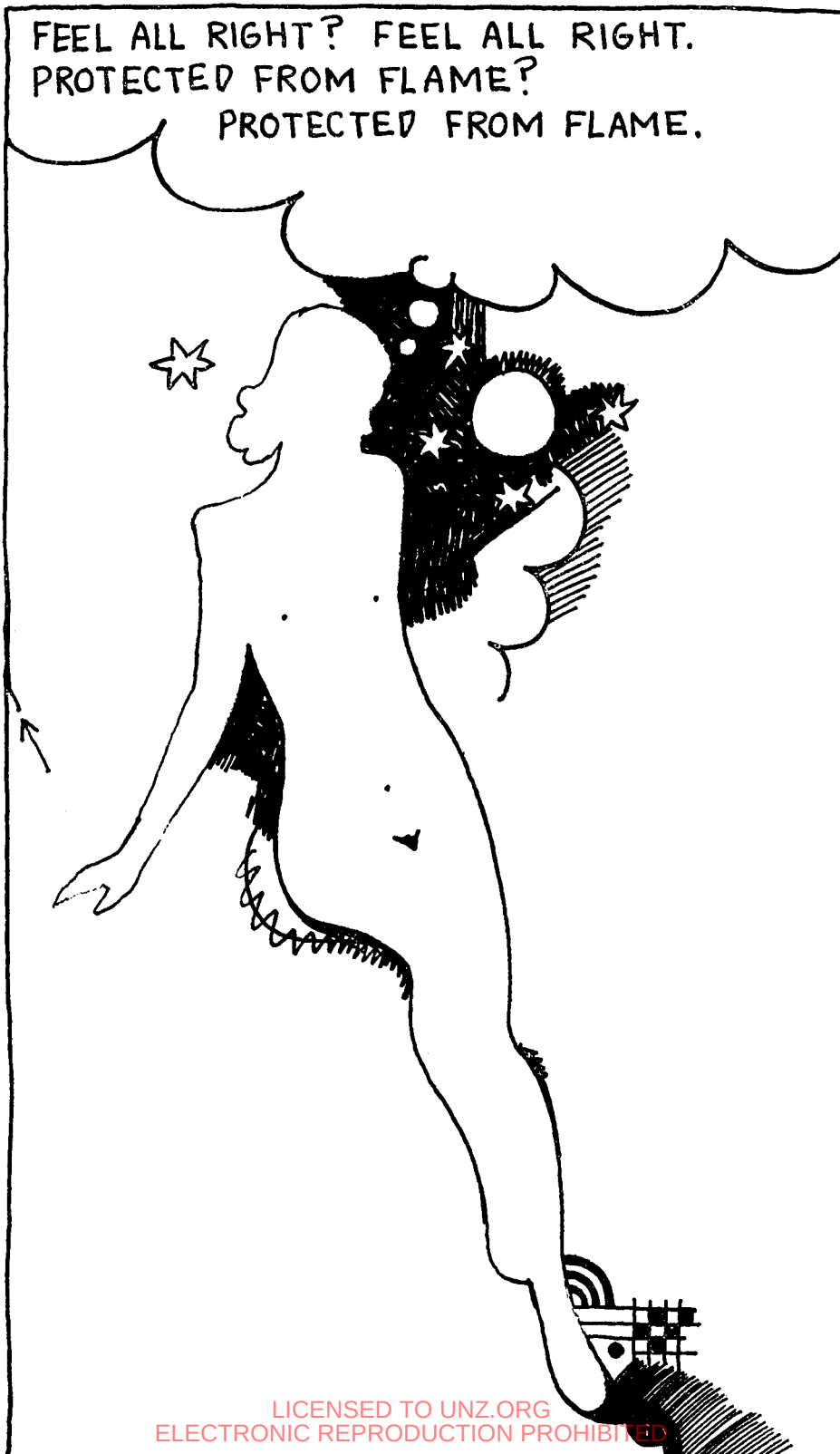

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DOWN GOES THE FLAME.

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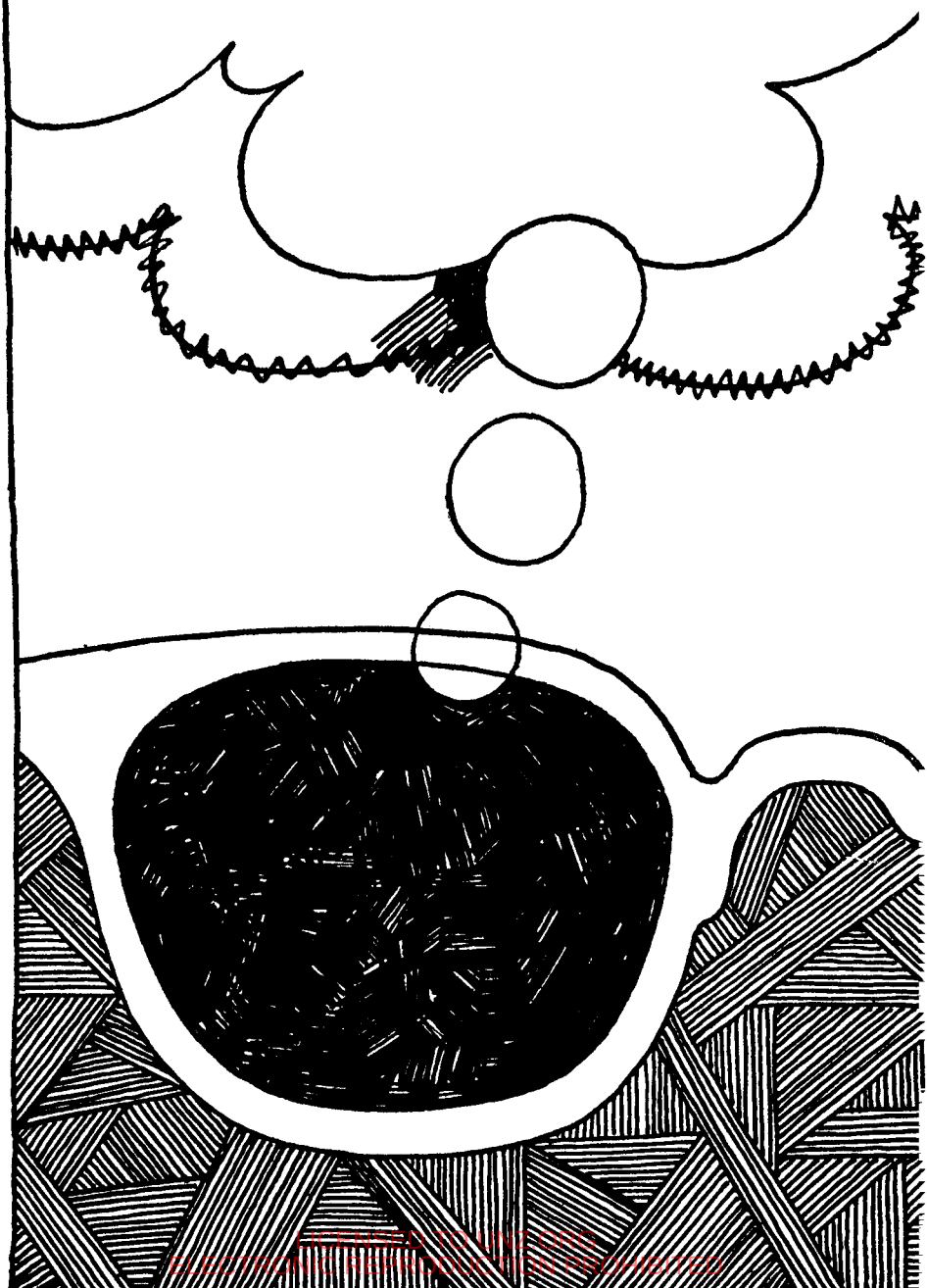
SOFT-SEEMING
AND RIGHT,



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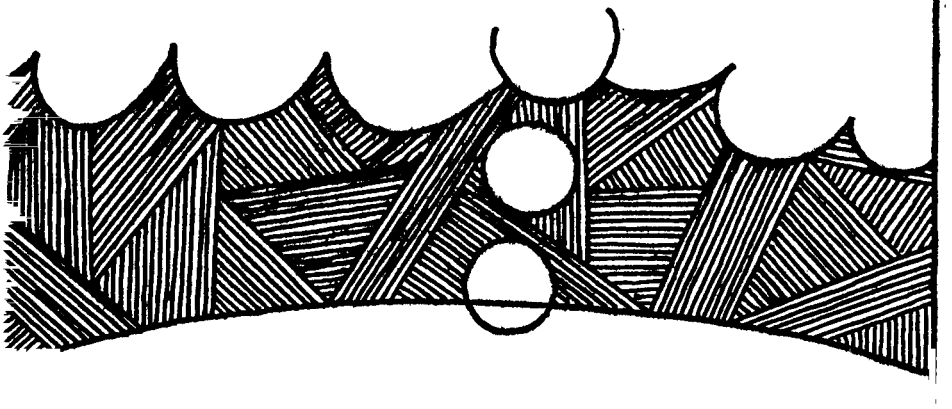
AS THE CENTER
OF ALL WORK.



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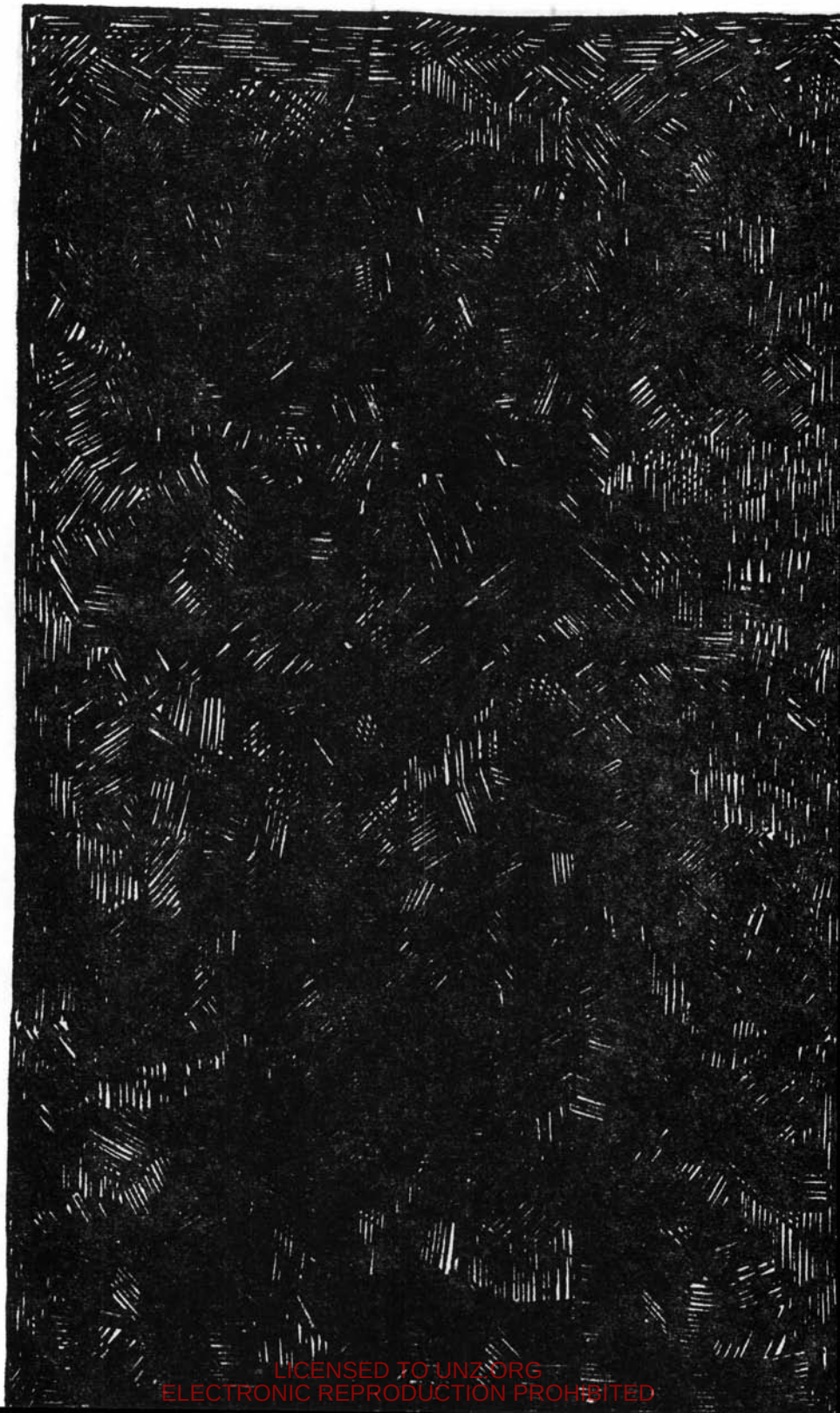

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The Octopus

Rudolph Wurlitzer

Yesterday afternoon a girl walked by the window and stooped for sea shells. I was wrenched out of two months of calm. Nothing more than that, certainly, nothing ecstatic or even interesting, but very silent and even, as those periods have become for me. I had been breathing in and out through the golden days, out and in, calmly, grateful for once to do just that, staring at the waves plopping in, successful at thinking almost nothing, handling easily the three memories I have manufactured, when that girl stooped for sea shells. There was something about her large breasts under her faded blue tee shirt, the quick way she bent down, her firm legs in their rolled up white jeans, her thin ankles—it was her feet, actually; they seemed for a brief, painful moment to be elegant. It was that thin-boned brittle movement with her feet that did it, that touched some spot that I had forgotten to smother. The way those thin feet remained planted, yet shifting slightly in the sand as she bent down quickly for a clam shell, sent my heart thumping, my mouth dry, no exaggeration, there was something gay and insane about that tiny gesture because it had nothing to do with her.

I went to Smitty's, a roadhouse a quarter of a mile down the beach. When I came back, she was gone. I could not sit in my room. The walls closed in on me. I could see the walls closing in on me, and my situation, if that is what it is, a situation, seemed suddenly so dull and hopeless; this cheap thrown-together guest house of imitation redwood on the California coast with its smell of mold and bad plumbing, the inane view from my window of driftwood and seaweed, flat predictable waves, corny writings in the sand, potbellied fisher-

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men and bronzed god-like volleyball players. I had to pull out, I thought, I was begining to notice things, lists were forming, comparisons were on the way. And now I don't have the octopus. I suppose that is what there is to tell about. Then I'll move on. Last night there was a storm and I abandoned the octopus. I didn't really abandon the octopus, it's still in the bathysphere on the truck bed and the truck bed is still up on blocks, but it's not the same anymore. I'm going to move on alone.

I have money and I can make money. I want to say that now. I'm no reprobate nor am I a drain on anyone. My great aunt left me two thousand a year and I have, or had, an octopus and a truck. A man sold me the octopus and truck in Oregon. I met him in a bar in one of those logging towns on the coast where the only attractive spot is the village dump, which at least has the advantage of facing the sea. Nog, he was apparently of Finnish extraction, was one of those semi-religious lunatics you see wandering around the Sierras on bread and tea, or gulping down peyote in Nevada with the Indians. He was dressed in black motorcycle boots, jeans and an old army shirt with sergeant chevrons still on the sleeves. His face was lean and hatchet edged with huge fuzzy eyes sunk deep in his skull like bullet holes. He kept complaining about a yellow light that had lately been streaming out of his chest from a spot the size of a half dollar. We drank and talked about the spot and the small burning sensation it gave him early in the morning and about his octopus. He had become disillusioned about traveling with the octopus and had begun having aggressive dreams about it. He wanted to sell it. We bought a bottle and walked out beyond the town into logged-off hills that looked like old battlefields. A low mist hung over a struggling second growth of redwood and Douglas fir. The tracks of giant caterpillar tractors wound everywhere. Pits and ditches were scattered about like shell holes. Thousands of frogs croaked monotonously and salamanders hung suspended between lids of green slime and rotting logs. I felt vaguely elated, like a witness to some ancient slaughter.

Nog lived in what had once been a water tank in the middle

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of a rough field. The octopus was there, all right. It was sitting inside a bathysphere on a truck bed. Nog had built a mold out of plaster of Paris for the tentacles and another one for the obese body with its parrot-like beak and bulging eyes. Then he had poured liquid latex rubber into the molds. The bathysphere was fashioned out of a large butane gas tank and stolen pieces of metal from a nearby bridge. There were three portholes from which you could watch the octopus move its eight tentacles around in the bubbling water. Nog had been traveling to all the state and county fairs through the West and Midwest, charging kids a dime and adults a quarter. Most people believed the octopus was real, but whenever there was a loud doubt Nog would tell them the truth. He would never give money back and occasionally there would be fights. In Bird City, Utah, the bathysphere had been tipped over by three men who had just been on a losing softball team. He was weary of the whole thing, he kept repeating. We sat down on a bench in front of his house and he filled me in on octopus lore. The crowds appreciated the devil fish myth the most and it was important to tell them how dangerous octopi are and how they can drown and mangle a human or sink a small boat. One should never tell them the truth, which is that octopi are quite friendly. I refused any more information. We sat quietly and it grew dark. Finally Nog said that he had stopped knowing how to entertain himself. He said he guessed that was my trouble, too, but that I should take a chance with the octopus. He suggested I transform it into a totem that I didn't mind seeing every day.

I bought the octopus and for a year I traveled through the country with it.

Nog is not quite clear enough. I have to invent more. It always comes down to that. I never get a chance to rest. I have never been able, for instance, to understand the yellow light streaming from his chest. But now that the octopus has faded away Nog might emerge into a clearer focus. Those were sentimental and fuzzy days, those trips through the West with the octopus, and sometimes I find myself wishing more of it were true. (I find, when I ruminate like this, that I invent

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a great deal of my memories, three now, to be exact, because otherwise I have trouble getting interested.) But I have gotten faster with myself and more even-tempered since I met Nog. Perhaps not even-tempered but certainly more dulcet. I think about trips, bits and pieces of trips, but I no longer try and put anything together (my mind has become blessedly slower), nor do I try as much to invent a suitable character who can handle the fragments. But I don't want to get into all that. There is always the danger that I might become impressed by what once was a misplaced decision for solitude.

I'm thinking about trying the East. I will go to New York and get a small room on the top of a hotel.

When I was on the road with the octopus I did a lot of reminiscing about New York. New York was, in fact, my favorite memory for four or five months until it got out of hand and I had to drop it. I lived in a comfortable duplex apartment on top of an old hotel overlooking a small park and harbor. I was sort of an erotic spy on myself then, but managed to survive, at least for those four or five months, by keeping an alert and fastidious watch on the terrifying view outside. I watched ships glide and push into huge docks, and far below, through silvery leaves, the quiet violence in the park. At night I stayed up with the fantastic lights of cars and subways as they flowed over the concrete ramps that weaved around the hotel. I lived precariously in the center of brutal combinations of energy and gradually, as I closed in on myself, the bridges transformed into massive spider webs imprisoning the subways as they rumbled like mechanical snakes across the black river. The subways shot off green and yellow sparks in defense, appearing in specific relays of time, always getting through. I had to drop that memory. But now, with more miles and memories in control, I might attempt New York.

From my window I can see the beach. An old couple digs razor-backed clams and a small boy writes David Salte Hates The Slug on the sand with a large knotted stick. It has never been enough for me to have a stick and some sand to draw in. I am not indifferent enough. I am too self-engrossed to play

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in the sand. But yesterday afternoon I was *trying* to at least get ready to play, trying to find the right approach, the right kind of silence, when the girl walked by. That touch of elegance ruined my confidence. It made me dwell on the time I have spent just getting by, made me hate the octopus and the kingdom of the octopus, the small towns, the long monotonous highways, the squalid fairgrounds. It made me take a walk on the beach.

One foot followed the other. It's a glorious beach, I suppose; usually empty, very wide and sandy. In back there are warm green mountains and most of the time the sea is well behaved, although it was rough then and it had begun to rain. I began to think of beaches. I have been on eighty-seven beaches in the last fifteen years. Before that it is easier to be vague. Lately I have been reviewing each beach although it isn't a satisfactory way of getting through the day. Too much of my life has been spent on beaches: Cannes, Far Rockaway, Stinson Beach, one beach in Ireland, two in Crete, Lido, Curaçao, Luquillo, Curadado, Malibu, Deya, Nice, Tangiers, Cob, the Virgin Islands—to name a few. I never run into the water. I am actually afraid of it. Nor do I get a suntan. I remain pale and sluggish. I lie in one place, usually on my stomach, and do nothing. For me, beaches are profane.

So there I was, reaching the end of the beach, thinking about beaches, when I saw the girl again. She was standing near a black rock, a yellow shawl wrapped around her face, staring inanely at the sea. I walked up to her and, standing a little apart and to the rear of her, I, too, stared at the sea. The waves were rushing in and out, quite furious now, sucking at the stones. I looked at her. She seemed not to have noticed me and for this I was grateful. I was happy enough just to stand there, next to her, for my former feelings about her foot were quite in control. In fact, I inspected her feet and it didn't seem possible that one of them should have acted as such a catalyst. Her feet were like her face, too broad and splotchy, rather crude and used up. Her dull features reassured me so much, in fact, that I thought I might be able to stay on for another few months.

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She turned towards me.

I have never been able to connect with strange women except if they are in distress or, in some way, hung-up. She looked abysmally happy.

"You live in the boarding house, don't you?" she asked. "Yes, I think you're the only one who is permanent there."

I wasn't able to answer, a common fault of mine.

"What do you do? I mean, we've all been wondering what you do. You look frail and timid, like some great thinker or something. That's what I think, anyway. My husband thinks you're recovering from some romantic disease. Who's right, him or me?"

She sat down on the black rock. The rain was drenching us. I was unprepared for such a downpour, being dressed in white seersucker pants, white paisley shirt and finely woven linen shoes. I stood near her, waiting, but resolved not to give out with any information. If pressed I might improvise on one of my memories. One should have an electric mind, I decided right there, not a tepid half-awake coping mind.

"Walk me down the beach," the girl said. "I'm so wet. We're *both* so wet. You don't mind, do you? I'll tell you a secret, we call you Dr. Angst because of the gloom on your face. You don't mind, do you?"

I walked with her. I was, in fact, deeply offended, not by being called Dr. Angst but by being noticed that much. Words began to spill out of me, quite out of my control. "Why try to know anything about a place?" I said, with a good measure of authority. "The customs, the size, the weather, the people, the economy, the politics, the fish, the suntan techniques, the games, the swimming. It is better to stay indoors and not mess around with useless experiences. A small room in a boarding house. Anonymous. Eat each meal at a plastic counter. Smitty's will do. Do nothing, want nothing, if you feel like walking, walk; sleeping, sleep. Do you know how hard that is? No memories; if they start to intrude, invent them. Three is sufficient. I use only three. New York for adventure, beaches for relaxation, the octopus and Nog for speculation. No connections. Narrow all possibilities.

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Develop and love your limitations. No one knows you. Know no one. Natural rhythms, my dear. That's the ticket."

She had wandered off to pick up a mussel shell. She came skipping back, bubbling with enthusiasm.

"I use them for collages. I paste them in, shells, colored pieces of glass, driftwood, anything." She giggled. "Did you know that today is the Fourth of July?"

"No."

"We're having a party. You're invited. Everyone is coming. Well, not *every*one, but Timmons and Harry and the man who runs the gift shop and one or two others. My husband, too, of course."

I put my arm around her. Her behavior seemed to allow for such an embrace as long as nothing called her attention to it. But she stepped away, giving me a quizzical glance. I am unable to cope with quizzical glances.

"I know you," I said decisively, trying to struggle away. "Ten years ago in New York; I don't remember your name but I *might* have even slept with you. It scares me stumbling onto a part of my past like that. You were more emaciated then, of course, with your hair very ratty. You were carrying a sign in some kind of a demonstration when I met you, old fashioned and fanatical, that's you, very political. Am I right?"

"I'm from Baltimore," she said with a shy glance down at her awful feet. "I've never seen a demonstration of any kind. We moved out here when Ollie got a job working with an agricultural firm. They transferred him. We like it fine."

"I won't press," I said. I have retained a certain amount of old-fashioned dignity. "Who you are and what you do are your problems."

We walked on in silence. The silence, in fact, was fierce. And, I was proud to think, not one piece of information had I given away. No history, therefore no bondage. I have known myself to give out with facts, numbers, names, stories. I am that nervous sometimes. But as I said before, I am faster now, more dulcet. It was a joy to walk beside her with only her self-conscious distrust of me to handle. She was thinking

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I was only a little weird, possibly diseased; she was too simple, too nice to think anything more. And I'm too haggard to produce sexual fears, I'm afraid, my ears are too huge and my lips too thin and uncontrolled.

We pressed on in the rain. I was all for delaying the walk as much as possible, but she was too determined to get home. Just before the house she had proudly marked as hers, we passed an old man in a First World War hat, struggling with a heavy log. He was bent and puffing as he tried to shift the log on top of a low make-shift sea wall.

I stopped. He was remarkably ugly and defiant.

"Colonel Green," the girl said. "He lives in that big three-story house next to ours. He has a grandson in there and some kind of a woman but they hardly ever show themselves. It's not a good policy to talk to him. He comes out in every storm. A maniac about the sea. He must be eighty, honest, and Ollie says that all that's keeping him alive is this crazy war he has going against the sea. Everyone thinks he's a blight on the community."

"Grab hold," Colonel Green ordered. He marched up and shouted in my ear. "Goddamn water rising at three hundred miles an hour. Too dumb to see it? Flood the whole town before anyone shifts ass to do anything about it. Fact. Lift her up."

I helped him lift the log onto the sea wall. He was dressed in a yellow mackintosh and big fishing boots. His furiously withered face was sunk deep into his neck and his tiny blue eyes, like two pale robin's eggs, protruded into the night, unblinking and beautiful.

"People," he yelled again into my ear. "Who's to tell people."

I helped him with another log. We labored and swore but the log kept slipping back onto the sand. Finally the Colonel ordered a halt and sat down on the sea wall, wheezing and kicking the wet sand with his boots. I could only pick out every third or fourth word the Colonel said, the wind was so strong and his voice had sunk to such a rasp, "Hear... No retreat... Only... Bastard sea... Kicking up higher... Iron woman... What?... What?... What?..."

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I went up and yelled in his ear, "Right. A huge operation. Biggest operation in years. Massive. Mounting up out there. Ready to initiate general collapse. *Any*time."

We yelled back and forth. Then he punched me amiably in the stomach and we struggled with the log. This time we made it. After another rest, we walked down to the sea for a better evaluation. "Jeep," the Colonel yelled, coming up to my ear again and grasping me by the neck so I wouldn't turn away. He only had, after all, so many words in him. "Good thick sand tires. Drag up every piece of maverick wood to the stronghold. Dig in! Protect the road!"

I nodded and followed him up the beach to his house. Before very long, however, I took a sharp turn to the left and ducked out of his line of march. As it happened, I was unfortunate enough to be standing in front of the girl's large bay window. She was standing with several other people looking gayly down at me. I didn't, of course, want to have anything to do with anyone. The evening had already been too much of a lark. It might possibly set me back for months. I wanted only to get to bed and pull the covers over my head. A few sips of whiskey, that would do me fine. Just to listen to the storm with a memory or two. To go over once again a few details about the octopus. My clothes were drenched. I had long ago taken off my shoes and shirt. I was suffering from chills. They were waving. But I wasn't going anywhere. I had done very well that night. I had talked far too much but was rather amazed at how well I had managed. Nothing had been said. It was all right.

A hand grabbed the upper part of my arm and escorted me into the house.

"It's about time," a low, modulated, terrifically friendly voice roared. "I'm Ollie, of course. *Glad* to have you aboard. You're quite the stranger around here. I won't even ask what you were doing with that old maniac out there. It looks like we got to you just in time. What's that? Look here, Sarah, this poor fella has had it. Get him some dry clothes. Better still, get him into my terrycloth bathrobe. That's it. Get in there now. That's the boy."

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I followed Sarah into the bedroom. She smiled at me and I took off my clothes.

"Now wait," she said very fast. "Listen. I don't know you. That bathrobe. The bathrobe is hanging in the bathroom."

I went into the bathroom and stood, shivering, behind the door. I, too, was a little ill at ease. After all, at first sight I've been told I'm not exactly pleasing to look at. "I was a track man," I yelled into the bedroom. "Four-forty under fifty-five seconds. I assure you." There was no answer. There didn't seem to be anything else to do but to give out with some information. "Slipping out from New York, you understand. Memories, that is. If you want to know. Stupid cloying things. I explained on the beach. I can dispense with it all in a few words. Look—hung up in New York, everything going too fast. Left and wandered out to Coast. Met Nog and bought octopus. Traveled to county and state fairs developing wonderful aversion to people and trips in general, but at the same time a growing obsession with octopus. Hard to even talk about it. Was afraid to let go, surrender it, walk away. Settled down here just to sit, you understand, wanting nothing at all. Waiting it out. Then thinking of beaches, developing that memory up to par with other two. Beaches, you know, beaches where most of life has dribbled away, past beaches, future beaches and now right here a..."

I ventured a peek out the door but she had left the bedroom. I preferred to think she hadn't heard me, that, indeed, she had never heard me. I could still slip out. The terrycloth bathrobe was hanging behind the door. I put it on and turned to investigate the bathroom. It was a beautiful bathroom. There was a huge green tile tub, a new toilet and washbowl. I opened the cabinet over the washbowl. I couldn't stop looking at the objects on the top two shelves: suntan oil, Anacins, cold cream, three pink hair curlers, two blue toothbrushes, one of which was very dirty, dramamine pills, Itolsol eye bath, Ban, Kolex cold capsules, Ammens Medicated Powder, and a small box of benzedrine pills. I stared at each object and then went over them again. A bottle of hydrogen peroxide fell from one of the lower shelves. It triggered off something.

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I dumped the contents of every bottle in the cabinet into the bathtub except for the benzedrine pills, which I put into the pocket of the terrycloth bathrobe. I turned the water on. It was a reviving thing to do. Then I turned the water off and stepped into the bedroom. The bedroom was painted a pale mauve. There was a king-sized bed, three small watercolors of clipper ships, a dresser, a sewing machine, two night tables and a television set. It was pleasant. I felt very relaxed. I got into bed and pulled the covers over my head.

I thought of Nog. He would be wandering over the Sierras probably, that yellow light streaming from his chest. I hadn't been able to think too clearly about the octopus since I had come to the beach. I had given it a chance, it wasn't as if I had deserted it. I had driven through the Northwest, the Southwest and the Midwest. Thousands of people had looked at it and many had even thought it was real. I had made money. But once off the road I could never go out behind the boarding house and look at it up on the truck bed. It was the last thing to throw away. Lately I've imagined its eight tentacles wrapped around my head, slowly smothering me.

I must have fallen asleep. A hand shook me.

"Now look. It's perfectly all right if you come in and use my terrycloth bathrobe and even take a nap in the middle of my bed, but why violate my bathroom?"

I slipped my head under the covers.

Ollie pulled the covers off the bed. I looked up at his face.

It wasn't too bad a face. It was broad and handsome in a crude, puffy way. Ollie was about to say something when Sarah took him by the hand and led him to the doorway. They whispered together. Finally Sarah came back and said, sweetly, "I'll bet you would like to join the party. We're going to have fireworks. Please, it will be fun."

Between the two of them I was escorted to the edge of the livingroom rug. There were only five people. There might have been more in other rooms but I counted five. I took care not to notice anything else. I sat down.

"The last time was in New York," I said.

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"Is that right," a fat man said. He was eating an egg and shrimp-salad sandwich and drinking bourbon and water.

"New York is an active place. Not as much action as you might have been led to believe, but still, an active place. I lived in a sort of penthouse. Beautiful furniture. Turn of the century stuff. A beautiful view."

"What exactly is your line?" I was asked.

"I'm a cultural impresario. Nog is the name. I'm investigating cephalopods or, as they say here, octopi or octopuses. Timid creatures really, much maligned."

The man excused himself and went into the next room.

The wind battered against the window. I remember that very well, the wind battering against the window and the hum of conversation. I pulled the curtain over the bay window to protect the room from the terrible racket of the storm.

There was boisterous talk about fireworks and drinking and last year's Fourth of July party.

Sarah advanced towards me, smiling bravely, "Having fun?" she asked.

"Of course I'm having fun," I replied.

"Would you mind telling me what you do," she asked. It was obvious that they were closing in on me. I was forced to throw out a series of delaying actions.

"You may ask," I said, being extremely polite. "Of course you may ask. I'm making a survey of the West Coast. Marine animals mostly. Did you know fossils of cephalopods have been found in rocks that are believed to be at least four-hundred million years old. They are harmless. Most people don't want to know that, refuse to know that, but they are harmless, even rather stupid... I am also making a survey of the Sierras and another, more general survey, on Los Angeles, Sacramento, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland and Santa Barbara, to name a few. I am also, on the side, so to speak, investigating totems."

I remember dancing.

I remember sitting for a long stretch looking at television.

Gradually I was able to become more anonymous. I ate roast beef and drank Seven-Up.

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I remember no more until I was asked down to the game room by Ollie.

"Now, Mister Mysterious," he said, laughing and slapping me on the back. "You can tell me what you do."

"A survey of beaches," I replied quickly. "Taking ten to fifteen years. The best years of my life consumed in this project. All over the western world. Marvelous and fantastic stories. Over eight beaches noted so far, actually eighty-seven. To name a few: Far Rockaway, Montauk, Las Palmas, Harrison's Landing, Brighton, Antibes, Westhampton, Orient, Marblehead, Malibu, Coventry, Winepega, the whole of the Ceylonese coast, Tangier, Tunis and Ceuta, that whole stretch, Ibiza and Formentera, Vancouver and two beaches in Rhodes and Hydra, three in Crete and only one in all of Ireland. The beach here, the present one, is calm, wide and sandy, few sharks, and a good class of swimmers. Weather mostly good. Except, of course, for tonight. Tonight there is a storm."

He handed me a ping-pong racket. We played ping-pong.

At first I just shoveled the ball back, trying to be polite. I managed to get the ball close to his racket. But then he grew angry and shouted at me to play ball. I put little twists on the ball and chopped back on the serve. He slammed back harder. Several times it appeared that he wanted to say something but we were playing so hard there was no time to talk. I kept him hopping. There were backhand smashes for him to contend with, forehand chops, tricky cross-court serves, sleezy slices. Balls sprayed around the room but he had a plentiful supply from a large wicker basket that hung from the ceiling on a wire chain. We played even harder and I rolled up the sleeves of my terrycloth bathrobe. Finally, wheezing and perspiring, he stood still, squeezing a ping-pong ball in his hand. He appeared to be stuck in some way. There was nothing else to do but grab the basket of ping-pong balls and fling them at him. That started him off. He yelled. I threw my paddle, catching him in the throat. Then I tipped over the table. He was left sitting on the floor.

I walked out of the game room and into the storm.

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Colonel Green was still working on the sea wall. He had managed to move one more log.

"Getting you down?" I yelled at him. "Worst storm in years. Watch battle fatigue. Absolutely all right."

The colonel surveyed the beach, his hands on his hips.

"Crashing... Now... 1936... The drift... Up later... No help... Tatters... Tatters..."

I grabbed the end of a log. "Where do you get these logs?" I yelled. "What do you do, push them back when the storm is over?"

"Selfish... 1936... Four door sedan... Stand tall..."

We labored some more but couldn't move the log. I went back to my room and went to bed.

What I should have done was get rid of the octopus, what I have been trying to do is get rid of the octopus, what I am beginning just now to remember was that I did get rid of the octopus. I see it now for the first time. I either took it back to the party and put it in the bathtub or danced with it on the beach. No, I did bring it back to the beach but not to dance with. I was inspired. I took off my terrycloth bathrobe and ran down to the truck and got the octopus out of the bathysphere, it's tentacles waving all over me. Struggling in the rain and wind I dragged it back and pulled it up on the sea wall. Such a spectator gave the Colonel enough of a jolt to finish the sea wall. Then together we threw it in the sea and I went home and went to bed. It was something like that, I can remember something like that, a storm, a party and then the octopus. There was an octopus although I know deep down that the octopus is still up on blocks. I know, too, that nothing happened and I haven't traveled with the octopus. But I shall move on now anyway, perhaps to New York. I remember great things about New York.

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Gauge

If you could tell me this sense of digression
And certain proclivity toward suffering, that
This will be settled on some future date, justifying
Its now being said,
                then you might say anything
And still not keep me, or nothing (and hello forever).

It's not for forgiveness that the wind blows.
Simply, it is toward a place from some other place
It will soon have forgotten, continually forgetting in order
Beautifully to pass;
                likewise, sitting still or not,
I get mixed up in that romance of the verb
You always withhold, wanting

Only peace. I often dream about you. Thought in my dreams
Is real thought, visiting, never out of delirium,
But bespeaking the crisp death of every real dream.

The disaster has been so easy and so natural—
The words have followed like a fast train;
                and now as if
A sort of train had passed I'm reverently standing
Hemmed in at last by the perfection of a former expression, sad
In a way you'll understand ("wind that glimmers at night
Amid white sheets") if only once and for a certain time.

—PETER SCHJELDAHL

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Stars of the Trees and Ponds

O blue and nerveless
stars. The night and the
distance of the lake.
The lake: mosquitoes, the
uni-inter air—the pond of
towering mosquitoes we float
through. Float:
the tents as we use
the lumpy earth under a
blanket. Cars: the

blanket of cars facing your
vision of stars and thoughts
never concealed to the lake.
Conceal: Thoughts are never
hidden, the mosquito cries to
the lake. And brings the
lake's invisible man

Invisible: a woman rises into
the lake and out of the lake
Pond: you are left in the tent
and see the beige pond.
Leak: a woman stands over you.
Woman: the pond leaks.
You hear it.

—JOE CERAVOLO

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The Georgics

On Sunday afternoon in Georgia I had nothing to do
So I sent myself back to Georgia underwater
In the traditional manner of the English
Renaissance. Could I maybe conk you
Out some poems? Huh? The highly polished poems
Of the English Renaissance daunt me
With their Latin tongs. Glossolalia
Liquors up the dative of mannerisms
In the Georgian manors of Washington.

Looking at his hand, the man said "ugh!"
Return to his damaged forearm, forearm
Which is an up to the minute examination
Of his partner's chiseled gaze. "Ugh!"
Georgie has four aces! He goes backward
To Georgia to lay down his last game.

Can I see them? Can you see them? "Glug!"
Are you thirsty? No, you are Georgia O'Keefe
And I have come back to you, a flowering maniac;
Come back to Georgia too, where we are dead,
Having nothing, needing nothing, desiring nothing.

—DICK GALLUP

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The Highwayman

Jesse Hill Ford

Little Frank came from Unicoi County up in the east end of Tennessee where the Unaka Mountains seemed to drop off under the roadside into valleys that made a man think perhaps he might be happiest if he were a bird and could soar above those green woods and meadows. This was often on Little Frank's mind, this bird business. He had always had a fanciful wish to be a bird at times for as long as he could remember. Now he was twenty-six, stood five feet four, weighed a hundred and nineteen pounds, and was tow-headed and had light blue eyes. He had been riding in the Chevy since soon after sun up.

Little Frank's sister, Lula, sat in the middle. Little Frank's brother-in-law, William, drove the Chevy. West they went. Here was a chance for a fine vacation trip, William had said before they left home, and before they had gotten in the car William had taken Little Frank out back of the barn and given him the pistol and two boxes of new ammunition. Little Frank was a dead shot.

William was a long tall man of twenty-two with humped shoulders and black hair which came to a ducktail in the back. He wore T-shirts, tight blue jeans, and white tennis shoes. He was very clean and careful of his appearance. His nose was long and sharp, his eyebrows dark and thick across the bridge of his nose, and he rarely smiled. He sat hunched against the door and drove the Chevy with great skill.

"Coming out of the hills now," William said. "This here's almost Middle Tennessee." The country round about seemed flat and parched to Little Frank.

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William slowed the Chevy down and turned it off the highway into a filling station which advertised regular gas for twenty-nine cents and offered discounts to truckers. The twenty-nine cents sign was the biggest thing about the place. Otherwise it was small and run-down and lonely as a buzzard's perch.

"Fill it full, Buddy Boy," said William to the attendant, an unhappy looking old man about fifty who needed a shave and looked like he didn't enjoy being called Buddy Boy. But maybe he needed William's business. He kept his tongue civil.

"Check the oil, too?"

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William had already opened the door. He swung himself out of the car holding to the steering wheel. He had long white arms and had folded a package of cigarettes into the sleeve of his T-shirt so the package rode neatly on his shoulder.

"Yeah, Buddy Boy," William said. Then he leaned over and looked in the car at Little Frank and winked. That was the signal. Little Frank opened his door and got out and followed William into the men's johnny, around at the side. William closed the door.

"Now what do you do?"

"Throw the gun on him and make him put the cash in the poke. Then walk him around here and have him shuck off his clothes and lay on the floor. Tell him if he don't mind hisself I'll blow his damn ass off. If he says one word or makes one peep. Close the door on him and come back to the car with the money."

William frowned. "Like nothing's happened," he said.

"That's right, William. Like nothing in the world's happened."

"Because it ain't none of Lula's business nohow," said William. "Come on then."

Back they went to the car where Lula sat, her face all blushed with the heat of midsummer, sweat beading her upper lip and pasting a little wisp of hair to her forehead. Little Frank waited, standing beside the hood of the car, feeling the heat come off it like standing by a stove. He watched as William paid the attendant and then looked across at Little Frank and winked again. Little Frank was feeling lightheaded from the sun being so bright and the day so hot.

William swung himself back under the steering wheel.

"Wait for me a minute," Little Frank said.

William started the engine and raced it. "Hurry up," said William.

"I'll just get a candy snack," Little Frank said, turning now and following the station attendant.

"Okay," William called after him. "We'll move out of the way for the next customer. Don't take too long." The

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Chevy roared and quivered and moved off to the edge of the highway where it paused.

Once inside the station Little Frank took out the pistol. The attendant turned around just then and saw it. "Oh, Lord," the man said. He started to shake all at once. Even his face shook and his hands caught the jerks. He dropped his windshield rag and his eyelids twitched.

Little Frank laid the cloth bag on the cash register. "Put the money in the sack," said Little Frank, "or else you'll get your ass blowed off, hear me?"

The man obeyed. He was taking in deep gasps of air like he couldn't get enough of it into his lungs. He took the money out of the cash drawer and sacked it in the little cloth bag—bills, half-dollars, quarters, dimes, nickels, pennies. Little Frank reached for the bag and shoved it inside his shirt. "Now git to the toilet," said Little Frank.

"Oh, Lord," the attendant said again. Little Frank followed him outside and around the building into the toilet.

"Take off your clothes—pants, shoes and everything."

"Oh, Lord. Don't," said the attendant, scrambling out of his clothes. Only his arms, his face, and his neck were a deep red-brown. The rest of him was pale as butter. In the close little room his fear came off him like the smell of rotting green leaves.

Little Frank motioned with the pistol. "Down," he said. The man sank to the floor of the room and lay flat on his stomach. The Chevy's horn sounded. Little Frank picked up the attendant's clothes and backed out through the door. "You come out and I'll blow you down," said Little Frank.

"Yes. Yes, sir," the attendant said, and Little Frank jerked the door shut.

Behind the station Little Frank tossed the man's clothes into a clump of horse weeds and put the pistol into his pants pocket. Passing the door to the toilet he stopped and listened. The heavy sounds of the man's breathing were like a broom sweeping concrete.

Then just like nothing had happened, Little Frank walked around the front of the station, across the hot gravel past the

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gasoline pumps, and got into the Chevy beside Lula. It was all like they had planned, he and William.

"What taken so long. I'm burning up," Lula said. "Speed up, William honey."

Hunched against the door, William had the Chevy floorboarded. He drove with his arms draped about the wheel like long thick ropes. "What taken you such a long while?" Lula said again.

"Aw, nothing," said Little Frank. Down the highway a good piece, what appeared at first to be two dogs trotted out on the pavement from a clump of Johnson grass at the roadside. The animals crossed in front of the car. Little Frank knew them at once for two foxes, they were so close—an old one and a young one, the last of her litter remaining at her side. William swerved the car but missed them both.

"Did you see that," Lula said.

"Foxes in broad daylight," said Little Frank. "Foxes!"

"Traveling," said William. "Looking for water most likely."

"Go back, William!" said Little Frank. "I want to catch that little one and make him a pet." Little Frank craned around and watched the foxes cross the unpaved strip edging the highway and go out of sight down the embankment. "*William!*"

"He's gone now," said William quietly. "Besides, you couldn't catch him."

"Yes I could. Turn around, William! Let me out!"

"Naw," said William. "No animals nor varmints. This here is all our vacation journey and mine and Lula's honeymoon."

Little Frank kept craning his head and looking at the highway peeling away behind them. "Hot damn," he said. "Hot damn. Wouldn't I like to make me a pet out of that little one. Did you see him, Lula?"

"Yeah, he was *real* cute. Couldn't make him no pet though, Little Frank. Too wild."

"Could. Could too. Hot damn."

Lula shook her head though, and pursed her lips.

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"Could, could, *could!*" Little Frank shouted and then went dark and sour inside himself. It nearly killed him to think of the little fox following around after him like a dog, eating out of his hand, curled up nights on the foot of his bed, sleeping there in a warm little round of fur. It would breathe so soft a man could just barely tell it was alive and not, he thought, *not just some stuffed fake a-laying there.*

"Fakes!" said Little Frank. "It's all in the world the both of you are, just a couple of fakes. If it's anything I hate it's fakes!"

"Why don't you catch hold of yourself and quiet down, Buddy Boy," William said, not taking his dark eyes from the road. "You're giving me the goddamn headache."

"Listen, Little Frank," said Lula. "I promise and pledge that the next fox we see I'll *make* William stop so you can catch it. Now, how's that?"

"We won't see no more. Never again," said Little Frank. And truly, he thought, just as they said, the young fox was bound to be gone now. Yet still and all he wanted William to turn the car around and go back. Little Frank would climb down the embankment and throw himself on the little fellow where he crouched beside some pool, probably having himself a drink of spring water. Before he knew what was after him, Little Frank would have him caught. Little Frank's heart ached, just wanting the little fox.

"Middle Tennessee is full of foxes. Thick as bees," William was saying. "We'll see lots and lots more, you'll see."

"And we'll stop for the very next one," Lula said.

"We sure will," said William.

Little Frank knew they were lying but anyway it made him feel better just having their promise to stop next time.

The next place was a grocery. It was set far back off the highway between two great old sycamore trees, a tacky little green painted building with a droopy front porch and not a sound, not a sign of life anywhere about when William pulled off the highway and stopped in front of it to let Little Frank out.

William winked at Little Frank. "Get me a pack of weeds,"

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William said, as Little Frank got out of the car. "I believe I'll take some cheese and crackers and a Upper Ten drink," Lula said.

Little Frank was no sooner out than William edged the Chevy away, back up to the shoulder of the highway, and stopped it there with the engine just barely idling.

Little Frank turned and climbed the porch steps out of the hot daylight, and passed through the screen door into the cool shade of the old building. It was all darkness inside for just a moment, like the gloom under a ledge of rock, and it smelled like cow feed and ripe apples and new bib overalls and twists of dark tobacco.

"What for you?" The old woman wore a straw hat. She stood propped behind a scarred wooden counter beside a big old iron cash register.

Little Frank reached in his pocket for the pistol, more used to it this time. "This here," said Little Frank, pointing the gun at her. "Put the money in a paper sack."

Calmly, too calmly, the old woman obeyed. She unfolded a candy sack and cranked the cash register and took the bills and put them in the sack first, one at a time, like they were eggs. Then she put in the change, the same way, and folded the top of the sack and pushed it across the counter to him. "Now what else?" she said.

"Some Winstons and a snack of cheese and crackers and one Upper Ten," said Little Frank.

The old woman went to the meat counter and cut the cheese and weighed it. She came back and packed up the cheese, a dime box of crackers, and the cigarettes, loading this sack just the same careful way. Everything's eggs to her, thought Little Frank. "And what else?" said the old woman in her stern high voice.

Little Frank didn't like her. She was too calm. It was hateful of her to stand there and take it so calm. "Watch that bottle don't wet the sack and bust out the bottom," she said. "Anything else?"

The Chevy's horn sounded a couple of impatient toots. Little Frank glanced toward the white intensity of sunlight

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beyond the front entrance. "Lie on the floor," he said, looking quickly back. The old woman was gone. A rustling sound like rats nesting in shucks came from under the counter and suddenly the old woman popped up just where she had been standing before. She was no sooner there than something deafened Little Frank, and he no sooner saw what it was she held clasped in both hands then she fired the pistol again. The roar stabbed his ears. He dropped the sacks and jumped backwards. She fired again—a third deafening pain. She was all the way straightened up now, glaring from under the brim of the hat like an old turtle, the revolver wobbling in her hands.

William raised his own gun, took aim, and shot her; dead, he knew, even as he rounded the counter, even before he rolled her face up. He lifted the brim of the hat, still held in place by a reach of cotton string tied under her sharp old chin. He saw a small oozing hole in her brow. He let go of the hat brim and drew quickly back away. *Dead.*

"Hot damn," Little Frank whispered. Then it served William right, though, he thought. Wouldn't stop for the foxes, so this pays him back. Smart ass. It was bred in William that *he* always had to have *his* own way. Always bossing other people around.

Little Frank went back for the money sack and picked it up from the floor in front of the counter. The drink, he saw, had broken and had sopped the other sack. No good, he thought. He decided to leave the shattered drink where it was, along with William's Winstons and Lula's snack of cheese and crackers. Served them right, he thought.

The presence of the old woman lying behind the counter made Little Frank nervous. It seemed that even though the old woman was dead her meanness wasn't, that her hatefulness was still alive and still beating, like a snake's heart. Cut the head clean off and the heart goes on a-beating.

He pushed the money sack inside his shirt, jammed the pistol back into his hip pocket, and walked out. The screen door slammed softly shut behind him as he stepped into the glare of the sunlight, over the reddish sandy gravel packed with rusty bottle caps—just like nothing had happened.

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Except that when he raised his eyes to the highway embankment, the Chevy was gone. He ran to the embankment and climbed up to the level of the highway. He looked both ways, where the concrete ribbon rose in either direction out of the cradle of the low, sun-flooded hills. There was not a car in sight.

"Well, fine howdy-do," he said. Made a man want nearly to cry, hot *damn* if it didn't come near to killing him, he thought, left standing like a side of goat to barbecue in the boiling sun for all William and Lula cared, gone *their* merry way without him. And here was the only way William had agreed to let Little Frank come along in the first place, if Little Frank would take over the pistol and get up the money and never let on to Lula what it was all about. *And now look.*

Army tricks, likely. He scowled. Here was something William likely picked up in the Army, tall black-haired William, and damn him anyway, all humped over the steering wheel and cigarette smoke curling up into his black eyebrows. *Too smart for his own good*, thought Little Frank, who had not gone to the Army. The Army wouldn't take anybody who couldn't read nor write any more than Little Frank, nor didn't stand over so high. And what now, he wondered. How far would the distance be back to Unicoi County?

He knew the direction at least, back the way they had come over that morning. Had he not left home he would be cool now and taking his ease. East then.

Little Frank crossed the highway and set off walking. "Hot damn, stick out your thumb!" he told himself. Cars passed with a thick slurring sound. A hot wind boiled after them, and the tires seemed to simmer the distance, making noises like a kettle over a slow fire. On and on the road stretched, all wavy with heat.

"Stick out your thumb!" No, but he couldn't. Once he'd turned around and faced a car he couldn't put his hand out. Hot damn, he couldn't beg. He was all too shy and too proud. Begging went against his blood.

He passed a box turtle smashed dead on the pavement, pink

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and yellow and black. Poor little beast, he thought, that lived his whole life in a shell and never bothered another living soul, yet there it lay. "And now the Law will come after me."

Jerking the pistol out of his pocket he hurled it far beyond the foot of the road bank into the weeds. He threw it with all the strength of the anger and sorrow bursting inside him, and threw so hard his arm ached in the shoulder joint.

He was not used to walking in such heat, in such weary despair. Yet remembering the foxes he quickened his pace.

"Can't be too far to where they crossed," he said. He took heart. He would search out the place, he decided. He would drive the old one off and catch the young one with his hands.

He had to pass right by the very spot anyway, and when he got there he would surely know it. *For certain*, he thought. The barest breath of a breeze set the leaves quaking in a willow thicket by the road. Something would tell him. Even if he didn't *see* the exact place, then maybe he would scent it.

Hot damn. A strange little smell in the air, something a little sort of odd, and right away he'd know.

"That's how I'll know," he said aloud, walking faster. "That's bound to be right where it's at."

There is snow on Vesuvius
And the barometer has dropped to one.
Winter again and Spring suspended
On metaphors and appetites.
The urgency of growing under the sun
Is hot with rites
And the colt who caries the least flesh
Runs best. There are no extremities left.
I hear the hush of sheet iron being cut,
The tear of frost where pear trees
Lean in a wind white with your breath.

—NANCY RYAN

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Sundays

James Salter

They are still in bed, windows open to the morning coolness. Her face has no make-up, her skin no shine. She has a cheap look in the morning, young, without resources. I imagine they wake at the same instant, like actors, like the cat in the café which opened its eyes to find me staring through the flat glass. Her breath is bad. My images are repeating themselves—there's nothing I can do. They crowd in on me. They come again and again, I cannot struggle free. Besides, there is no place to go, they would follow me into dreams.

"*Bonjour*," she says. She kisses his stiffened prick.

"He never smiles," she says, looking it in the eye.

"Sometimes," Dean murmurs. Her mouth feels warm. I try to find darkness, a void, but they are too luminous, the white sky behind them, their bodies open and fresh. They are too innocent. They're like my own children, and they illustrate an affection which has little reason to, which in fact does not exist except that she—at the very bottom it is her only real distinction—she knows how to make things come true. Her mouth moves in long, sweet reaches. Dean can feel himself beginning to tumble, to come apart, and I am like a saxophone player in a marching band—in love with a movie queen. Soft-eyed, lost, I am tramping wretchedly back and forth at halftime. My thoughts are flailing. The batons flash in mid-air. The whole stadium is filled. I am marching, turning, marking time while she slowly circles the field in a new

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convertible. I am a clerk in her father's brokerage. I'm the young waiter who sends bouquets of flowers. I am a foreigner who answers the telephone wondering who can be calling, and it is the police. I cannot understand at first. They have to repeat it several times. There is an instant when my heart turns to lead: an accident. A motorcar...

There is a rise on the road to Sens and then, suddenly, a hundred meters further on, the skid marks, tar-black. The road curves. There is broken glass, motorcycles, people gathered around the wreck. The ugly underside of a car is showing, turned up to the sky. The wheels are motionless. A *gendarme* in white leather gauntlets is waving drivers past. People bend over to look beneath the wreckage. There is no haste. Everyone moves with deliberation. Only a few children are running on the grass.

"It's a Citroën," Dean says. A motorbike is crushed beneath it. They pass slowly. Now they can see the feet of someone laid out near the trees. On the pavement are dark runs of blood.

"They're always in accidents," he says. "I don't understand it."

"They're very fast," she tells him.

"Citroëns? They're not so fast."

"Oh, yes."

"How do you know? You don't even drive."

"They always pass us," she says.

I know this road well. It leads to *les Settons*, the lake where they go to swim. Anne-Marie stands in the shallow water. She has earrings on and a necklace. She bends her knees to immerse herself and then swims like a cat, her neck stiff, her head up. After a moment she stands up again.

"You must teach me," she says to Dean.

He tries to show her the deadman's float. Breathe out through your mouth, he tells her. No. She doesn't like to wet her hair.

"You have to."

"Why?"

"Come on," he tells her. "You can't learn unless you do."

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She shrugs. A little puff of contempt—she doesn't care. Dean stands waist-deep in the water, waiting. She doesn't move. She is sullen as a young thief.

"Take your earrings off," he says gently.

She removes them.

"Now do what I say. Don't be afraid. Put your face in the water."

She doesn't move.

"Do you want to learn or don't you?"

"No," she says.

They put their clothes on behind the car. No one else is around. Near to shore the surface of the water is broken by weeds. The leather seats are hot, and when Dean starts the engine small birds skim out of the grass and out across the lake.

They eat in Montsauche in a little *auberge*. Sunday. Everything is hushed. Dean sits looking out at the street. It's a silent meal. Afterwards there is nothing to do. He feels as if he is taking care of a child. He is thinking of other things. The day seems long. They drive—Dean takes the top down and they head towards Nevers, the wind curving in, the sun on their backs. He begins to grow sleepy. They pull off the road.

They lie down under the trees. Pines. It's very quiet. The dry cones click in the breeze. The shadow of branches is laid across their faces. Dean closes his eyes. He is almost asleep.

"Phillipe," he hears her say.

"Yes."

"I would like to make love in the woods sometime."

"You've never done that?"

"No."

"Strange," he says.

"You have?"

He lies. "Yes."

"I have never. Is it nice?"

"Yes," he says. It's the last thing he remembers.

When he wakes, he feels cold. He sits up and rubs his forearms. His skin is creased from the grass. A few dry pieces are stuck to him.

They walk aimlessly, Anne-Marie brushing the back of her

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skirt a little, down to a stream. There's a small, iron bridge. They stand in the middle of it. Beneath them the water moves slowly. In places, clear as reflection, one can see the bottom. There are fish in the shadows, completely still. The water flows around them.

"Do you see them?" she says.

Dean is dropping pieces of twig. They meet the surface gently, drift away.

"We could catch them," she says.

The pieces are light. They seem to float down from his fingers.

"Do you like to fish?" she says.

"No."

"No?"

"It's too cruel," he says.

"They don't feel."

"How do you know?"

"Oh," she says, "they don't."

The fish linger, aligned with the flow. A few drift across the pale flats where the water is clear, pass to a deep menstruum, vanish.

"Why catch them?" Dean says. "They're happy."

"Until they are eaten by a *brochet*," she says.

"Well, that's what I'd be," he says. "A *brochet*. Live in the river."

"They would catch you."

No. He shakes his head.

"Yes. Someone."

"Not me," he says. "No. I'd be a very smart *brochet*."

"All right," she says. "And I will be your *brochette*."

The water is moving very slowly. Dean throws a small stone. The surface dissolves. I will be your *brochette*. It is really a quiet, domestic life they are engaged in. Suddenly he perceives this. The phrase pierces him like wire. She smiles. She begins to grow beautiful once more. It is always mysterious how she can change. By evening, in the *Etoile d'Or*, he can hardly take his eyes from her. She has fixed her hair and made up her face. She butters a piece of bread for him.

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"*Ça va?*" she asks. She knows.

"*Ça va,*" he says. He nips at her finger. The oestrus of night comes down over him like a hood. He can feel it descending, changing his flesh.

They climb the stairs. She goes first, as always. Her calves flash before him, turning away, rising on the narrow treads. Her key opens the door. Dean's prick begins to stir, and as he doubles the pillow later and she rises on her elbows, his mind is already cut loose and wandering as if he cannot keep himself together. He is thinking of what it will be like without her. He cannot repress it. Like the cough of a sick man, a weakness rises to frighten him, an invisible flaw, and he embraces her with a sudden, dumb intensity. Her back, even the word for it is beautiful, *dos*, lies beneath him, the back she never sees, the smooth intelligent back upon which, like a table, he has gazed for so many hours. He rears in the darkness to admire it. He had forgotten. Every minute of the day seems to have converged. He wants to slow them, to have this sweet ending last.

Over France a great summer rain, battering the trees, making the foliage ring like tin. The walls grow dark with water. The gutters are running, the streets all abandoned. It started at dusk. By nine it is still pouring down.

They are in Dole. They stare out the window of a plain café where they have been sitting for an hour or more. Across from them is an empty park, not very large. In it a strange apparatus is being erected. A high wire. Two tall poles have been guyed to the ground. Men are still working in the rain, testing the lights. From time to time the façade of buildings opposite appears in the blue floods, but the wire itself, strung in the upper dark, is invisible. Over the rooftops, like flowers, fireworks burst without sound.

It's a local fête. There would have been a crowd, but the rain has kept them away. Only a few families huddle beneath the awnings now. Others sit inside cars. The lights go off again. The square is in darkness.

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The café is not empty. There's a table with three men and also, in a raincoat, white legs showing beneath it, the acrobat, who waits at the bar. His face is hard. He's been there for a long time. After a while, the *patron* offered him a drink. *Merci.* The glass is empty now. He stands there quite alone, a man in his thirties, the coat hung over his shoulders.

In a low voice running like a secret, Anne-Marie begins to describe him. He comes from the city, a poor section of Paris —she knows it well. He has a daughter, she explains, a little girl who travels with him, the mother has run away. They journey all over France together, only the two of them. The cheapest hotels. The little girl has no friends, just her father, and for toys a single doll. She's always quiet. She never speaks. Dean doesn't recognize this famous story. He glances at the weary face of the man; upstairs the child is sleeping. It's all bitterly real to him, a fiction for which a place already existed in his heart.

Outside, they have finished the preparations. They come into the café to say this. Somehow the acrobat seems strangely disinterested, nor do they stay to keep him company. One has the feeling that someone else exists, an impresario, an unseen man whom they all obey.

The acrobat has accepted another drink. Dean watches cautiously, afraid of what he sees. Premonitions of disaster come over him. The entire machinery: strings of colored lights along the guy wires, the slender poles rising high into darkness, the invisible platforms—it is all a death they are arranging. He is certain of it. He can feel it in his chest.

The acrobat has said nothing, not a word. He has hardly moved. One loves him for this passivity, this resignation, and for his face which has a gypsy darkness. If it continues to rain there can be no performance, and the rain falls heavily, seldom shifting, drumming on the drenched cloth of the car outside. Only a few people still wait.

Dean counts out the money for the bill. The franc pieces seem unusually brilliant. He lays them in the saucer. They make a little clicking sound, like teeth, a clear sound, and in that instant he becomes aware it has been heard by, has

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awakened, the solitary dreamer at the bar—he glances up but no, the acrobat has not noticed. He is gazing into the mirror. His white-stockinged legs, powder white, are crossed at the ankle. His slippers are frayed, but he is more than he seems, this man. He is an agent, an emissary. He has selected a disguise in which he moves nervously, white as a moth in the spotlight above the common crowds, but it is all a conceit. He is far more important than that. Dean knows this. He recognizes it—impossible to explain. It really does not even concern her. It is all meant for him, and when it is announced that the performance has been cancelled, Dean receives the news without surprise. It makes no difference. The performance itself was incidental.

"Wait here," he says. "I'll get the car."

He vanishes into the rain. Anne-Marie stands just inside the door until the car pulls up with that vast, irregular grace, its headlights yellow and reflecting in the windows of the café, the wipers ticking slowly. She runs for it. He leans across the seat to hold the door open. His face is wet, his hair. She gets in hurriedly.

"What rain!" she says.

Dean doesn't drive off. Instead he tries to look through the running glass, to see inside the café one last time. The bar is empty. The acrobat has gone.

They drive through the streets of an unknown town. The rain pours down like gravel. In the green light of the instrument panel he feels as homeless, as desolate as a criminal. Gently she wipes his wet cheeks with her fingers. They have nowhere to go. They are strangers here, the doors of the town are closed to them. Suddenly he is filled with intimations of being found somehow, of being seized and taken away. He doesn't even have a chance to talk to her. They are separated. They are lost to each other. He tries to cry out in this coalescing dream, to tell her where she should go, what she should do, but it's too complicated. He cannot. She is gone.

A genuine desperation overwhelms him. He hasn't the money to really go off with her. They are imprisoned in the

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smallness of Autun, a night or two away doesn't matter, and now, yes, he knows it, they have been discovered. Dean is sure of this. And I, too, in retrospect, I see he was right. The acrobat has disappeared into the villages of France, into the night of all Europe, perhaps. The Delage is alone on the streets. One need not follow as it crawls through the darkness—it can be recognized anywhere.

Dean is dispirited. In the hotel room he undresses carefully, laying them down as if the clothes are not his, as if they are to be burned. The night is cool with all its rain, and a chill passes over his nakedness. He feels lean as an orphan. The past has vanished and he fears the future. His money is lying on the table, and in the dark he goes over to count it, the paper bills only. He lifts the folded notes. The coins spill off, and one falls to the floor, rolls away. He listens but cannot tell in which direction it has gone. Anne-Marie comes up behind him, naked too, and suddenly he is transfixed, like a hare in the headlights of a car. Her arms steal around him. Her body touching him, the points of her breasts, the soft bed of hair, is a virtual agony. They caress one another, pale as embryos in the dark.

She wants to be arranged over a chair. Dean finds one. She bends over it. Her breasts hang sweetly, like the low boughs of a tree, like handfuls of money. His hands slide to her waist which is narrow. He begins slowly, and she breathes as if sinking into a bath. From without is the sound of pouring rain.

In the morning it is calm. He awakens as if a fever has passed. Europe has returned to its real proportions. The immortal cities swim in sunlight. The great rivers flow. His prick is large and her hand moves to it as soon as her eyes open. He searches his clothing for the crumpled, leaden tube. He hands it to her. She looks at it impassively. He kicks the covers away as she unscrews the cap. She begins to spread it on. The coolness makes him jump. Afterwards she rolls over and in the full daylight he slowly inserts this gleaming declaration. Her forehead is pressed to the sheet. Her eyes are closed. Dean barely notices. Finally he is entered all the way. He lies still.

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"Would you like to read?" he says.

"*Comment?*"

"Read. A magazine."

"Yes." she answers vaguely.

They move to the edge of the bed. There is an old copy of *Réalités*. He reaches for it and pulls it to the floor. Her head leaning down, she starts to turn the pages. Dean looks over her shoulder. It is Sunday morning. Ten o'clock. Only the occasional, soft leafing of paper interrupts the stillness. She has come to an article about the paintings of Bonnard. They read it together. He waits until she has finished the page. Gently he begins.

"Not enough *graisse*," she says.

He withdraws carefully—she is almost clinging to him, it feels—and she applies a bit more, wiping her fingers afterwards on the sheet. In it goes—she lies calm—and intrigued by a page that shows photographs of the fourteen kinds of feminine appeal (innocence, mystery, naturalness, etc.), he begins to move in and out in long, delirious strokes. France is bathed in sunshine. The shops are closed. Churches are filled. In every town, behind locked doors, the restaurants are setting their tables, preparing for lunch.

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Footnote to Allen Ginsberg Interview, Issue #37

June 2, 1966

To readers of The Paris Review:

Re LSD, Psylocibin, etc., Paris Review #37. p. 46: "So I couldn't go any further. I may later on occasion, if I feel more reassurance."

Between occasion of interview with Thomas Clark June '65 and publication May '66 more reassurance came. I tried small doses of LSD twice in secluded tree and ocean cliff haven at Big Sur. No monster vibration, no snake universe hallucinations. Many tiny jeweled violet flowers along the path of a living brook that looked like Blake's illustration for a canal in grassy Eden: huge Pacific watery shore, Orlovsky dancing naked like Shiva long-haired before giant green waves, titanic cliffs that Wordsworth mentioned in his own Sublime, great yellow sun veiled with mist hanging over the planet's oceanic horizon. No harm. President Johnson that day went into the Valley of Shadow operating room because of his gall bladder & Berkeley's Vietnam Day Committee was preparing anxious manifestoes for our march toward Oakland police and Hell's Angels. Realizing that more vile words from me would send out physical vibrations into the atmosphere that might curse poor Johnson's flesh and further unbalance his soul, I knelt on the sand surrounded by masses of green bulb-headed Kelp vegetable-snake undersea beings washed up by last night's tempest, and prayed for the President's tranquil health. Since there has been so much legislative miscomprehension of the LSD boon I regret that my unedited ambivalence in Thomas Clark's tape transcript interview was published wanting this footnote.

Your obedient servant
Allen Ginsberg, *aetat* 40

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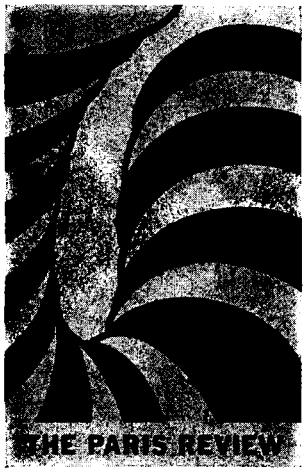

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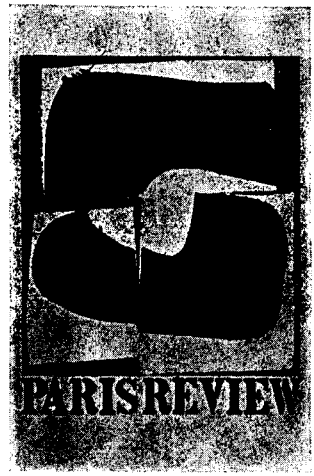

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Rosalyn Drexler *(Dear)* had her first novel, *I Am The Beautiful Stranger*, published in the United States last year; it will soon appear in England and France. She was awarded an "Obie" (off-Broadway theater award) for her play with music, *Home Movies*. At present she is working on a novel tentatively called *To Smithereens*.

Jesse Hill Ford *(The Highwayman)* received the Atlantic award for his first published work, "The Surest Thing in Show Business," in 1959. His first novel, *Mountains of Gilead* (1961), was followed by *The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* which was nominated for the National Book Award in 1965. He lives in West Tennessee.

Rudolph Wurlitzer *(The Octopus)* is in his late twenties and lives in New York. He has previously published "The Boiler Room" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and is now working on a novel.

James Salter *(Sundays)* is the author of two novels, *The Arm of Flesh* and *The Hunters*, which was about the Korean War, in which he fought as a pilot. He has lived much of his life in Europe, and is now resides in New York State.

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INTERVIEWS

Olga Carlisle *(Interview with Arthur Miller)* has published a book on Russia, *Voices in the Snow*, which included the interviews with Pasternak and Ehrenburg she did for THE PARIS REVIEW. Another interview, with Yevtushenko, appeared in THE PARIS REVIEW #34. Her new book, *Poets on Streetcorners*, will be published next year.

Rose Styron *(Interview with Arthur Miller)* has published poetry and translations in a number of magazines, including THE PARIS REVIEW #26. Her book of poems, *From Summer to Summer*, was published by Viking Press. She is now working on translations to be included in *Poets on Streetcorners*, and lives in Roxbury, Connecticut, with her husband, William Styron.

CHRONICLE

A note on the late **Conrad Knickerbocker** *(Malcom Lowry in England)* appears on page 13 of this issue.

POETRY

Joe Ceravolo has published poetry in *Art & Literature*, *Mother*, *Lines*, *Slice*, *"C"* and other magazines. He is married and lives in Newark, New Jersey.

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Dick Gallup was born in 1942 and lives in New York. His first book of poems, *Hinges*, appeared in 1965. He is at work on a play called *The Bingo*, sections of which have appeared in *Kulchur* and *Slice*.

Michael Heller has lived near Malaga, Spain, for the past year. He is a 1959 graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a native of New York.

Le Roi Jones is the author of two books of poems, *Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note* and *The Dead Lecturer*. His most recent books are *The System of Dante's Hell*, a novel, and a book of social essays, *Home*.

Nancy Ryan has lived in Italy and France for the past five years. She is currently writing a novel.

John Montague is the author of numerous books of poems and stories; the latest, *All Legendary Obstacles*, was published by Dolmen Press in Ireland in 1965. An Ulsterman, he has lived in Paris for the past five years, and has also taught several terms at Berkeley where he shared the poetry workshop with Gary Snyder.

Peter Schjeldahl is a native of Northfield, Minnesota and a graduate of Carleton College. He now lives in New York, writes for *Art News*, and edits the magazine *Mother*.

DAN JACOBSON
THE BEGINNERS

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'His panorama is in faultlessly deep focus' *Sunday Times*
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DACIA MARAINI
The Holiday

Bored by her convent school, Anna feels she must learn about life and love before she returns to the piety and ennui of her education behind convent walls *21s*

VLADIMIR NABOKOV
Despair

A murder story? A thriller? A horror story? A study in alienation or the problems of identity? An early novel set in pre-War Berlin, it has now been completely re-written and translated by the author *25s*

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ART

Joe Brainard was born in Salem, Arkansas in 1942, and now lives in New York City. His paintings and constructions can be seen at the Alan Gallery. He is the editor of *"C" Comics*, and his writing has appeared in *Film Culture*, *Mother*, *Kulchur*, and *Fuck You*.

Kenward Elmslie wrote the librettos for *Lizzie Borden* and *Miss Julie*, both performed by the City Center Opera Company in 1965. He has published *Pavilions*, a book of poems.

Jack Youngerman, the cover artist, lived and traveled in Europe and the Near East from 1947 to 1956, and now resides in New York City. His paintings and drawings have been included in important shows and collections in North America, Europe, and the Far East. His work can be seen in New York at The Betty Parsons Gallery.

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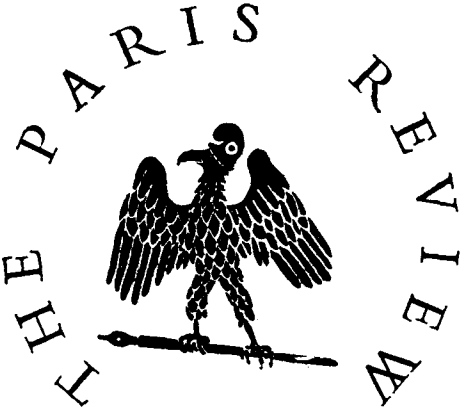

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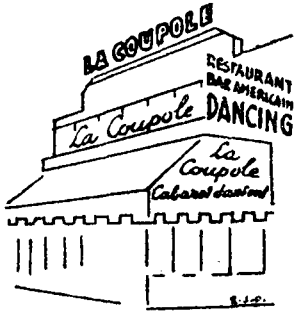

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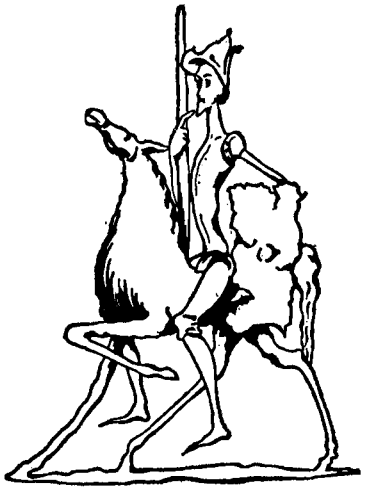

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